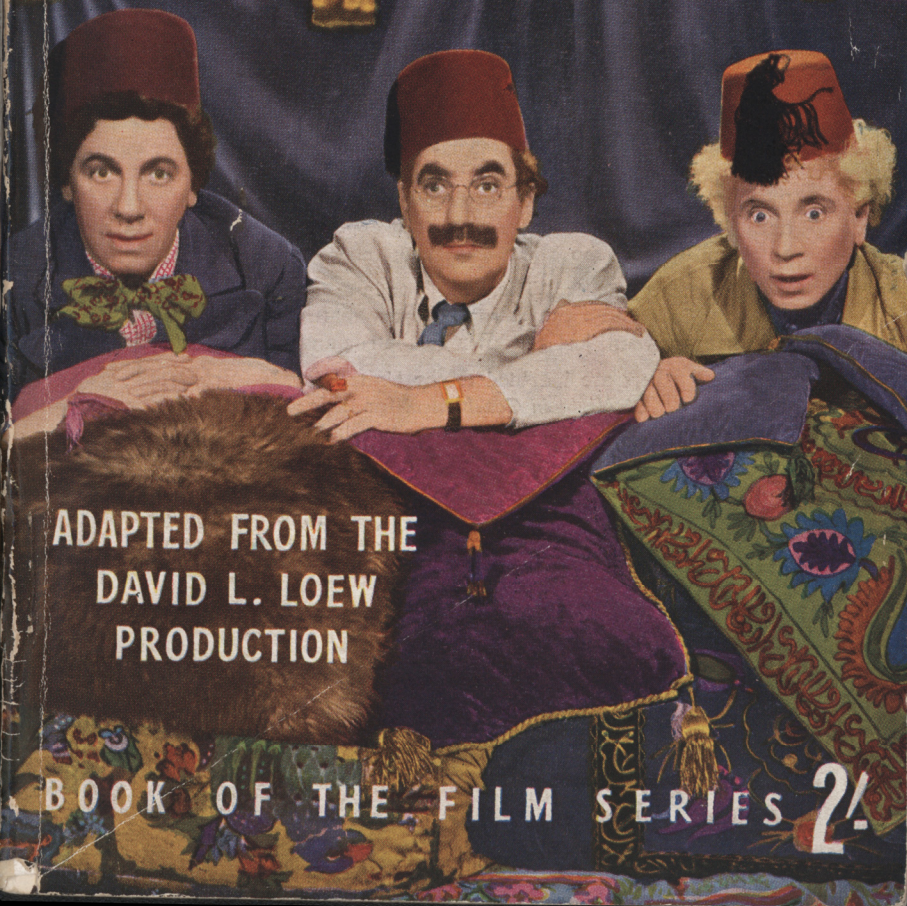


A NIGHT IN CASABLANCA

by D.L. AMES



ADAPTED FROM THE
DAVID L. LOEW
PRODUCTION

BOOK OF THE FILM SERIES 2!

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INTRODUCTION

DURING the past few years we have done without many of the things which make life most worth while—nylon stockings, elastic sock-suspenders, bananas and the Marx Brothers. We have had nights in air-raid shelters but not Nights at the Opera; days in queues but not Days at the Races.

Now at long last we have *A Night in Casablanca*, one of the good things of the peace. Villainous ex-Nazis, heavily disguised, are trying to get away with loot planted in Casablanca during the Occupation. Glamorous spies abound, and shady Arabs. But the place also swarms with the Marx Brothers, and the spectator, when he recovers from splitting his sides, begins to feel a sort of vague pity for the shady Arabs, glamour girls and ex-Nazis. Reparations, Nuremberg trials and so forth, one feels, are only fair. But to submit the enemy to the experience of living in a hotel run by Groucho Marx is carrying vengeance too far.

As Groucho puts it: "There's a floor in every room, a mattress on every floor and a prayer-rug on every mattress. If you don't see what you want, just get down on the rug and pray for it."

The publishers are indebted to the United Artists Corporation, distributors of *A Night in Casablanca*, for their kind co-operation and for supplying the photographs and film script from which this book was produced.





Harpo picks up a thing or two.

DAVID L. LOEW'S

A NIGHT IN CASABLANCA

THE BOOK OF THE FILM

by
D. L. AMES

ADAPTED FROM THE
ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY
JOSEPH FIELDS AND ROLAND KIBBEE

HOLLYWOOD PUBLICATIONS LIMITED
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1946

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CHARACTERS

<i>Ronald Kornblow</i>	GROUCHO MARX
<i>Rusty</i>	HARPO MARX
<i>Corbaccio</i>	CHICO MARX
<i>Beatrice Reiner</i>	. . . . .	LISETTE VERA
<i>Pierre</i>	. . . . .	CHARLES DRAKE
<i>Annette</i>	. . . . .	LOIS COLLIER
<i>Captain Brizzard</i>	. . . . .	DAN SEYMOUR
<i>Galoux</i>	. . . . .	LEWIS RUSSELL
<i>Emile</i>	. . . . .	HARRO MELLOR
<i>Kurt</i>	. . . . .	FREDERICK GIERMAN
<i>Count Pfefferman</i>	. . . . .	SIG RUMAN

A NIGHT IN CASABLANCA

CHAPTER ONE

EVEN before the coming of Ronald Kornblow, Rusty and Corbaccio the lovely Moorish city of Casablanca had had an eventful history.

For many years—ever since the French conquest had given its veneer of Western civilisation to the half savage, half oriental life of Morocco—Casablanca had been a favourite resort of the international smart set. Fashionably dressed women mingled with swarthy Arabs in the teeming *sûks* or alleyways of the old town. Tourists in solar topis snapped photographs of graceful minarets. Traders of every nationality bargained hotly in the crowded bazaars. In the expensive hotels in the European section men in white linen suits sipped whiskies and sodas, absinthes or iced German lagers, according to their tastes and nationalities. At night the Casinos were crowded while fortunes changed hands at the roulette tables.

Such had been the relatively quiet routine of life in Casablanca before the war. Then came 1940—the fall of Paris—the Vichy government. In Casablanca the muezzin continued to call the faithful to prayer. The sun continued to bake the white streets of the ancient Moorish city. The consumption of whisky and soda fell off. That of German lager increased.

Two years later the Yanks arrived, accompanied by General Patton. Coco-cola replaced lager as the popular beverage. G.-I.'s mingled in the bazaars. Dull and respectable *sûks* became places of adventure for the younger generation of veiled Moorish girls. Nor was it noticeable that the number of such intriguingly veiled creatures decreased during this episode in Casablanca's history.

Then came the Casablanca Conference—which we will skip. All North Africa was once more free. Germany fell. The tricolour of France again waved proudly from the flagpoles of Casablanca's more imposing edifices. The world was once more at peace. This also we will skip.

For worse still was to happen to Casablanca.

Peace brought with it many blessings, some of them doubtful. Three in particular were nearly disastrous. These were Ronald Kornblow, Rusty and Corbaccio.

The gravity of this triple-headed disaster will be more easily grasped when it is explained that Ronald Kornblow turned out to bear a striking resemblance to Groucho Marx. In fact, beneath the phoney moustache and ten-cent cigar Ronald Kornblow was Groucho Marx.

Rusty—tousled-headed, dumb, but lecherous—was thinly disguised as Harpo, much too thinly disguised according to one or two of the prettier guests at the Casablanca Hotel whom he chased on all occasions through the lobby of that luxurious hostel.

Corbaccio—the glib, plausible proprietor of the Yellow Camel Taxi Company—spoke with an Italian accent which suspiciously resembled that of Chico Marx. This may be distressing, but it is not surprising. Corbaccio was Chico Marx.

But we are anticipating. At the moment when our story begins the three Moroccan menaces—Casablancon curiosities—banes of the bazaar, or what you will—are comparatively innocuous. Groucho—or shall we say Ronald Kornblow?—no, let's say Groucho—is still out somewhere in the desert, running a little clip-joint which he calls a "Motel." This is a kind of hotel, kind of being the operative phrase. Rusty—or shall we say Harpo?—has somehow obtained, and up to the moment managed to keep, a job as valet at the otherwise irreproachable Casablanca Hotel. Corbaccio—okay, Chico—is still running the Yellow Camel Taxi Company. That is, the meters fitted to the Camels do the running; the Camels walk.

Of Casablanca's more imposing edifices, from the flagpoles of which the tri-colour of Free France was mentioned as once more waving, the Casablanca Hotel was perhaps the most imposing. Its white façade gleamed in the midday sun. Moorish arches, scintillating in their delicate coloured stone tracery with every colour of the rainbow, pierced the façade here and there, leading into shaded gardens and intimate patios where on cool lawns beneath gay sun-shades the fashionable world of Casablanca had gathered to sip a pre-luncheon *apéritif*.

Monsieur Rolizoides toyed for a moment with the stem of his cocktail glass, anticipating the first cool sip of the exquisitely blended dry Martini. He had earned it. Managing the Casablanca Hotel was a full-time job.

It was also an important job, demanding not only experience, constant vigilance and hard work, but also tact and diplomacy. For the Casablanca Hotel was more than a mere commercial enterprise. It was an institution. Belonging to the French Government, its style was a matter of prestige and its manager was a person of some consequence in local society.

Monsieur Rolizoides was a distinguished-looking gentleman who perfectly fitted the position which he filled. He glanced around the crowded courtyard, nodding graciously at the more important guests, exchanging an occasional salutation with couples who passed his table in French, English, Dutch, as occasion called for.

Although he had been Manager of the Casablanca Hotel only for a few weeks, he was rightly proud of the job he had done. The Hotel had never been run more smoothly—or more profitably. Even Galoux, the great Galoux, Governor-General of the province, had congratulated him. "Much more satisfactory than our last two managers, M'sieu," Galoux had said.

Our last two managers. Monsieur Rolizoides put down his untasted cocktail and somewhat hastily lighted a cigarette. The bland and almost perpetual smile on his face flickered out for a moment. He wished he had not thought of the last two managers. Both had been removed from the managership rather suddenly. And not entirely satisfactorily. For both had died.

Nor had the death of either been altogether accounted for. Unpleasant whispers had gone through the market-place, and the police had asked countless questions.

Monsieur Rolizoides suppressed the faint spasm of uneasiness which these reflections had momentarily caused him. To his knowledge he had not an enemy in the world.

He raised his glass and savoured the dry fragrance of the iced cocktail, at the same time catching the eye of Count Pfefferman two or three tables away. Monsieur Rolizoides nodded amiably. Count Pfefferman was one of the hotel's most distinguished guests, rich, aristocratic. He was of Dutch origin—or at least so his passport stated.

The Count was a tall, formidable man of middle-age who held himself with military erectness and concealed a harsh arrogance beneath a cryptic smile. He was smiling cryptically now as he glanced from the manager of the Casablanca Hotel to his pretty companion, Beatrice. Bea Reiner was perhaps more than pretty. In fact there was no perhaps about it. She was a knock-out. In the evenings she sang in the Hotel Cabaret with marked effect upon the male contingent.

She returned the Count's quick glance and stroked the small pekinese which curled contentedly in her lap. Young men observing her felt that the pekinese was on to a good racket.

But to return to Monsieur Rolizoides and his drink, which he still contemplated with unquenched thirst. Already he had forgotten Count Pfefferman and Beatrice. He had not observed the curious baleful glint in the Count's pale eye as the cocktail glass touched his lips. Otherwise he might have enjoyed that cocktail less.

He glanced at his wrist-watch, recollected an engagement and drained the dry Martini at a gulp. He rose. But as he reached his feet the cheerful scene around him suddenly kaleidoscoped before his eyes. Then it went blank. He tottered, slumped and fell forward with a crash across the top of his table.

A woman screamed. Half a dozen people at nearby tables leapt to their feet. Curious, scared, stunned, they crowded gingerly around the table where Monsieur Rolizoides lay inert across the gay checked tablecloth.

But Count Pfefferman and his pretty companion did not follow the crowd. Instead they finished their drinks, rose casually and wandered away. Before he disappeared Count Pfefferman caught the eye of Kurt, the waiter, who had served Monsieur Rolizoides with his last earthly cocktail. Though no words were exchanged the Count's swift glance seemed to say: "Well done!"

A young man in the uniform of a Lieutenant in the French Air Force had been the first to reach Monsieur Rolizoides' table. He

was a clean-limbed young man with pleasant, open features, and his name was Lieutenant Pierre Delbart.

"Call a doctor—quick!" he snapped.

But even as he spoke he knew it was already too late. Monsieur Rolizoides' heart had already stopped beating.

"What is it, Pierre?" the frightened voice of Pierre's companion demanded at his elbow.

Pierre turned to Annette. His face was grave.

"He's—he's dead."

* * * * *

Captain René Brizzard, Prefect of Police, received the news of Monsieur Rolizoides' death with mingled rage and impotence. Captain Brizzard was a short, stocky man with a strong face and a square black beard. He wore a crumpled linen suit and a red fez at a jaunty angle. His fingers drummed thoughtfully on the table. He was thinking it was about time to eat.

Across from his desk Galoux sat. Galoux, the Governor-General of the province, was a man in his middle sixties, pompous, fussy and irritable. He started as the phone rang. Brizzard's capable fingers grasped the receiver.

"Captain Brizzard," he snapped into the phone. "What! Rolizoides!"

His already dark face blackened as he listened, and finally he replaced the receiver.

"Rolizoides fell dead at the hotel," he explained tersely to the Governor-General. "Dr Fouchet thinks he was poisoned."

Galoux spluttered. "This situation is becoming intolerable. Three managers of the Hotel Casablanca in the last six months!"

Both men had risen. Shouting instructions to a police sergeant to round up the usual suspects, Brizzard descended the steps of the Prefecture two at a time. Half an hour later, in the office of the late manager of the Casablanca Hotel, the Prefect of Police had nearly finished interviewing the staff of the hotel.

Gloom had settled as it were permanently over the brows of Captain Brizzard and Governor-General Galoux. Annette, the charming young Parisienne who half an hour ago had been Pierre's companion at the scene of the fatal cocktail incident, had filled countless sheets of paper with her shorthand notes of the interviews. Annette worked for the Prefect of Police.

But in spite of her notes no clue to the poisoner had emerged. Nor could any reason be suggested why anyone at all should wish to murder the manager of the Casablanca Hotel. Brizzard and Galoux were worried. Not only were unsolved murders bad propaganda but a new hotel manager had to be found. This was going to be increasingly difficult if they continued running through managers at the rate of one every two months.

"In all my experience I've never come across a series of murders with so few clues," Brizzard growled when the last of the suspects had been cross-examined and dismissed.

Annette rose. "Won't you please listen to Lieutenant Delbart?" she pleaded, not for the first time.

Brizzard threw up his hands impatiently. Annette was always trying to make him listen to this Lieutenant Pierre Delbart. But the Governor-General interposed.

"Who is Lieutenant Delbart?" he queried.

"I'm sure you'll be interested," Annette eagerly seized the opportunity. A moment later she was presenting the young airman to the Governor-General. Pierre saluted smartly.

"I'm honoured, Monsieur Galoux," he said politely. And then to the Prefect of Police with the faintest grin: "A pleasure to see you again, Captain Brizzard."

"You are on active duty, Lieutenant?" Galoux queried briefly.

"I am on reserve, sir. I wear the uniform because I have no other clothes."

Brizzard interrupted with impatience. "You have something to tell us about the Rolizoides affair, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, Captain." Pierre nodded grimly. "Doesn't this confirm the theory I spoke to you about last time?"

"What theory?" Galoux's voice was sharp.

"Not a theory," Brizzard deprecated. "An Arabian Nights fable!"

"But it is true, Monsieur." Pierre appealed to Galoux. "I am the only one who knows."

"And nobody will listen," Annette added.

"Well—I'm listening."

Pierre turned to Galoux gratefully. "It was in Paris, during the occupation," he said earnestly. "The Nazis ordered me to fly a plane to South America. They forced me at the point of a gun. The cargo was worth millions. It was Nazi loot—jewels, gold, priceless paintings. I couldn't bear to fly it out of French territory, so I cut off my fuel and crash-landed here in Casablanca. I was interned, investigated." His young face hardened as he came to the end of his story. "When I managed to get back to the plane—the treasure was gone."

Galoux had listened with polite incredulity. "But what has all this," he questioned quietly, "to do with the murders?"

"The Casablanca Hotel was run by the Nazis. . . ."

"But now it is operated by the French Government," Brizzard reminded him sharply.

"That's just the point!" Pierre insisted. "Some group is desperately trying to gain control of the hotel. It can't be for profit—it's Government property. But it *might* in some way be connected with the treasure!"

Galoux studied the young French airman cynically. "And what is *your* interest in all this?"

"If the treasure is still in French territory it will prove that I acted as a patriot," Pierre answered frankly.

"Ah—that's it."

"Lieutenant," Brizzard broke in curtly, "we are not concerned with clearing your name. Our only interest is solving these murders and finding a new manager." The Prefect indicated the door.

"Good-day, Lieutenant," he concluded.

Pierre turned away. His shoulders slumped as he passed

through the door. In the lobby outside he heard light footsteps behind him. He paused. It was Annette. She slipped a slim, affectionate arm through his.

"If you're going to have a drink, darling," she murmured sympathetically, "I'm going to have one too."

Pierre scowled, then softened as he always did when Annette looked at him like that. "What's the use, Annette," he grumbled, "you and I haven't a chance."

"Don't worry, Lieutenant," her pretty eyes mocked him. "I'm not going to propose to you again. You turned me down last time."

Poor Pierre! With a story that no one would believe! Without work, without papers or the prospect of getting work! Suspected of having collaborated with the Nazis! Pierre Delbart's future was indeed grim. No respectable girl in Casablanca would have looked at him, in spite of the fact that he was quite good to look at. But Annette squeezed his arm possessively. She had promised not to propose to him again, but she had every intention in the world of breaking her promise as soon as possible.

Meanwhile in the office of the late manager of the Casablanca Hotel Galoux and Brizzard were still in conference. They glanced up to see Count Pfefferman, who had strolled into the room. Brizzard bowed with a touch of deference. The Count was a person of importance.

"I was greatly distressed to hear of the tragic accident," the Count sympathised. "Rolizoides was a fine hotel man. You have the opinion of an expert." And the Count bowed stiffly.

"The Count once managed the Hamstel Hotel in Amsterdam," Brizzard explained to Galoux, brightening up considerably as an idea crossed his mind.

"Before I retired," the Count added modestly. "If there is any way I can be of service. . . ."

"Perhaps we could prevail on you to take over here?" Galoux suggested.

The Count laughed. It was an unattractive laugh. Children had been known to burst into tears when Count Pfefferman laughed.

"My dear Governor," he shrugged, "manage *this* hotel! You know, I value my life, too!"

Brizzard sighed. "I can't say I blame you." "But let me think about it," the Count added hastily, fearing he might lose the job if he overplayed the reluctance. "If you gentlemen will do me the honour of dining with me to-night, I'll give you my answer."

"Delighted," Galoux agreed.

"Shall we say eight o'clock?"

Brizzard nodded eagerly. "And I hope you decide to take it." And when the Count walked blandly out of the room, having obtained exactly what he had come to obtain, both Galoux and Brizzard were suffering from the delusion that they had done a smart bit of work.

CHAPTER TWO

COUNT PFEFFERMAN ascended happily to his luxurious suite of rooms on the sixth floor. He was pleased with himself. He was convinced that that same rich treasure which young Pierre had flown during the Occupation from Paris was hidden somewhere in the Casablanca Hotel. With himself installed as manager of the hotel he would be in a key position for finding it at his leisure.

He dressed for dinner carefully. In the mirror over his dressing table he admired his strong, manly face while he knotted his white evening tie. He was perhaps the only person in the world who admired that face.

Behind him the door stealthily opened and Kurt, the waiter, entered with a tray. For the benefit of those readers who were asleep a few pages back, Kurt was the same waiter who served the late Monsieur Rolizoides with the poisoned Martini. Taking the reader entirely into our confidence, the Count, Kurt and the lovely Beatrice Reiner are in cahoots. All three are thoroughly bad lots—except Beatrice, who has her points. All three will indubitably turn out to be Nazis—as if you didn't know.

On Kurt's tray a cablegram rested. The Count ripped it open. It read: "ZXE&///"? :xzvXZ," or words to that effect. The Count reached into his pocket and removed a small leather-bound book entitled "Alice in Wonderland." Turning over a further page, it read: "German Imperial Staff—Code Keys—1944."

The Count looked helplessly from the cable to the code-book, muttering beneath his breath. Decoding had always been his weak point. It required intelligence.

"Get Bea," he said to Kurt as he paced the room trying to figure it out. Apparently Bea was intelligent, too. Alone again, he glanced at his wrist-watch and turned impatiently towards the adjoining dressing room.

"Valet!" he shouted. "Valet! Hurry, you swine!"

Now this was the Count's first serious blunder. For the valet thus described was Rusty, and Rusty was Harpo Marx. The astute reader will have realised that the Count had enough on his mind already without summoning Harpo to his assistance.

Harpo's day had already been eventful. At the time of Rolizoides' murder he had been leaning philosophically against the wall of a picturesque building in the bazaar. He had been leaning there happily for hours, scratching his frizzled yellow head, tooting his horn occasionally to ward off ennui, leering hopefully at masked Moorish ladies and generally minding his own business.

When Captain Brizzard's gendarmes had been ordered to round up the usual suspects, one gendarme had not unnaturally paused with deep suspicion beside Harpo. Even in the bazaar of Casablanca Harpo's criminal appearance stood out. The gendarme motioned him to come along. Harpo gaped amiably and con-

tinued to lean with outstretched arm against the building. The gendarme waxed sarcastic.

"What do you think you're doing?" he snarled. "Holding up the building?"

Harpo's features twisted into an obscene smile. He was pleased with the gendarme's discernment. He nodded.

But the gendarme was in a hurry. He grabbed the unoffending Harpo and pulled him roughly away.

The building collapsed.

A silent gendarme stared from the ruin of rubble and dust to the retreating Harpo. Next day the gendarme was admitted to the Casablanca Insane Asylum.

Count Pfefferman found Harpo in his dressing room shining shoes. Harpo had his own method of shining shoes, a method almost as complex as his own mind. This consisted in fixing about twenty shoes at a time to pegs driven in the wall, so arranged that a shoe protruded from under each arm, between the legs, on either side of the neck, along the small of the back—in fact in contact with every available surface of Harpo's body.

All he then had to do was rumba. The arrangement was sensible. He enjoyed doing the rumba and he hated polishing shoes. The only rub was that it required about twenty shoes.

Harpo extricated himself from this shoe-polishing apparatus at the sight of the Count's furious face. He could take a hint. He seized the Count's waistcoat and tails from a hanger in the closet, prepared to be useful. He had taken a correspondence course in "How to be a Valet."

While Harpo helped the Count to dress, Kurt returned with Bea. Harpo did his job efficiently, making only one minor error. He put the Count's waistcoat on inside-out.

"See what you can make of this." The Count tossed Bea the cable. "My decoding is not what it used to be."

"Brizzard kept me," Bea apologised for her delay. "He questioned everyone who works in the supper club."

"We have nothing to worry about," the Count reassured her. "In a few moments at dinner I accept the managership. I could have agreed this afternoon, but did not wish to appear over-anxious."

Kurt had been studying the cable. "It's from Shvegler in South America," he began.

"I know. But what does it say?"

"He's getting impatient." Kurt spelled out the cable with difficulty while the Count, Bea and Harpo peered over his shoulder. "Why — delay — speed — imperative. Every lost moment increases danger."

The Count's attention was suddenly distracted by the sight of his waistcoat in the mirror. The effect was certainly unconventional.

"Idiot! Moron!" He turned on Harpo. "The vest is inside-out!"

Harpo immediately did his best. But he was nervous. After a while he got the vest right, but by this time the Count's jacket

appeared to have gone wrong. It was inside-out. In order to cover up this slovenly workmanship, which might be construed as casting a doubt upon his skill as a valet, Harpo hastily helped the Count into a light evening overcoat. Unhappily, in so doing he inserted the Count's walking-stick into the back of the overcoat. The Count, still preoccupied with the decoded cable, absent-mindedly placed his hat on top of the walking-stick instead of his head.

The total effect was not that of the well-dressed Count about to dine with the Governor-General. The count turned on Harpo. The Count was beginning to feel a little annoyed.

"Dog!" he snarled. "Lunatic! Inferior ape!" And who is to say that he was not right? "Stay away from me. Clean up these rooms."

Harpo warded off a sock on the jaw, and, obedient as always, retired into the next room, where he plugged in the vacuum-cleaner. He gave the room the once over, removing a certain amount of dust and doing relatively little harm to the furniture. The Count, fully dressed at last, came in to give himself a last admiring inspection in the full-length mirror.

In the same way that elephants never forget, Pfeffermans never learn. No intelligent Count would have gone within a stone's throw of Harpo Marx all dressed up like that. It happened so swiftly that the Count didn't even realise it. Harpo's vacuum-cleaner, which he bore jauntily over his shoulder, came in brief contact with the Count's bullet head. A breath of wind—whist! And it was gone.

We refer to the Count's toupet. For now the secret is out. The Count's fine head of hair was not his own. It concealed a barren expanse of hairless skull, neatly indented with a tell-tale scar from an old wound which unfortunately had not been fatal.

"And now, my colleagues," the Count smiled blandly, "I am ready to dine with the Governor-General."

His colleagues looked at him aghast. Bea saw the expanse of skull with a shock of girlish disillusion.

"You can't go without your toupet!" Kurt exclaimed. "It's dangerous. They might recognise you!"

The Count clasped his bare head. Sudden murder came into his eyes. Silently he strode to the next room, where Harpo was doing something obscure on his hands and knees. Harpo, helpful as ever, pointed to the Count's bald head and whistled.

"Where is my toupet?" The Count stormed.

Harpo shrugged. He emptied both his pockets. No toupet. The Count slapped his face. He did it again.

"I've got to find that toupet," he growled. "I can't leave this room until I do." He started to hit Harpo again, but seeing there was no future in it, abandoned the idea. Instead he snapped:

"Get the maid."

At the word "maid" a grin of low cunning spread over Harpo's features. He rubbed his hands together happily and smacked his lips. Getting the maid was even more fun than shining shoes.

"Count Pfefferman is half an hour late," Galoux complained,

as he and Brizzard sat before untouched drinks in the small, intimate supper club of the Gambling Casino.

"He has no intention of accepting," Brizzard shrugged. "You can't really blame him."

Galoux nodded. It looked like it. Which meant that they still had to find one live manager for the Casablanca Hotel.

"I have an idea," Galoux suddenly exclaimed. "I'll send a wire to the manager of the Desert View Hotel."

"Perfect," the Prefect agreed. "He's way out in the desert and won't have heard about the murders."

* * * * *

We must differentiate sharply between the Desert View Hotel, which Governor-General Galoux had in mind, and the Desert View Motel, where the Governor-General's telegram was eventually delivered. Why this mistake was made is unexplained. Maybe the telegraph boy couldn't read. Anyway, it's one method of getting Groucho Marx into all this.

A Motel, for the benefit of the uneducated, is a place where people with motor-cars and without the price of a decent hotel, can drive in, pay a dollar and camp for the night. A low-class sort of affair.

The Desert View Motel consisted of a bogus Moorish archway through which you passed into a court where six tents with striped awnings faced a sand driveway. On one side of the archway four poles supported an awning. Tacked to one of the poles was the sign: "OFFICE—RONALD KORNBLOW, Managing Director."

Upon reading this sign the wary traveller normally fled. For Ronald Kornblow was the name under which Groucho Marx passed in the desert. If he persisted, the traveller would discover, reclining on a mattress with rather too much oriental ease, Ronald Kornblow himself, complete with strangely-fitting linen suit, a red fez and an elaborate water-cooled pipe. The usual ten cent cigar was fitted into the end of this pipe, but the phoney moustache was retained on his upper lip.

But this morning business disturbed Mr. Kornblow's siesta. Mr. Kornblow looked up as though he resented the physical effort. Mr. Kornblow—we'll drop the Mister. On second thoughts we'll drop the Kornblow too. Groucho looked up.

An immense Arab had materialised from one of the tents. A customer. In fact the customer. Groucho scrambled to his feet, removing the cigar from the hookah and placing it in his mouth.

"Ah!" he remarked suavely. "Mr. Shrak Siad!" The bland smile of the Motel-keeper was touched with suspicion. "Checking out, eh?"

Behind Mr. Shrak Siad a slim Arab girl emerged shyly from the tent. Groucho bowed.

"And Mrs. Shrak Siad!" he greeted her.

A second Arab girl appeared, blushing.

"And Mrs. Shrak Siad!" Groucho nodded.

A third followed. "And Mrs. Shrak Siad!"

"And Mrs. Shrak Siad! And Mrs. Shrak Siad . . . and Mrs.

Shrak Siad . . . and Mrs. Shrak Siad . . . and Mrs. Shrak Siad . . . and Mrs. Shrak Siad . . . and. . . ." The careful Motel-keeper counted them on his fingers as they emerged. He presented the huge Arab with his bill.

"Let's see, Tent No. 2, the bridal suite. Shrak Siad and twenty-eight wives for twenty-seven days."

The giant Arab shook his head. "No," he said.

Groucho glanced apologetically at the register. "Twenty-seven wives for twenty-eight days," he suggested.

The Arab nodded. "Yes," he said.

"I'd have charged you for an extra wife if you weren't on your toes," Groucho pointed out. "And it takes quite a man to be on his toes with twenty-seven wives. I'd be on my heels."

The Arab paid up silently and walked off, followed by his long retinue of wives.

At that moment Groucho became aware of sobbing in Tent No. 2. A woman's voice. Groucho's brain worked rapidly. He slicked back his hair and straightened his tie. A moment later he was inside the tent. Twenty-six vacant oriental couches greeted him. But on the twenty-seventh a girl reclined. She was weeping. She was also extremely pretty. Sympathy with those in distress was instinctive with Groucho—if they had a figure like that of the sobbing girl on couch twenty-seven. Kind-heartedly he flung himself on the cushions beside her.

"Fine husband," he comforted her. "He checks out of here and forgets you. Don't cry. I wouldn't worry about him. Men are ten cents a dozen . . . I wish women were."

"He'll come back for me," she murmured.

"Well, he'd better hurry. Remember the management is not responsible for wives left over thirty days." His comforting arms went round her, optimistically. "Don't be a fool. Come away with me!"

"I'll never leave here," she sighed. "I'm part of Africa, and Africa is part of me."

Groucho inspected her with approval. In most parts of the world you get jailed for that kind of inspection. "Well, at least," he admitted, "I'm seeing the best part of Africa."

As he glanced up he realised that this remark was not strictly accurate. For what he now saw was the giant Arab standing in the door of the tent.

"What these tents need is a fire-escape," he reflected, toying nervously with an hour-glass beside the couch. He observed the running sands in the hour-glass with sudden horror. "Gad! Look at the time! A quarter to eleven!" And he slithered past the big Arab without pausing for further chit-chat.

At the Office a honeymoon couple were waiting to book accommodation. That is to say there were a couple of blushing brides, one handsome young Arab groom and a camel, who probably wasn't one of the party.

"Honeymoon, eh?" Groucho leered at them. "You can have No. 2. It's still warm. As a matter of fact it got too hot for me." He thrust a pen into the bridegroom's hand. "It's a lovely

tent, with a fine view of the ocean."

The Arab was plainly puzzled. "I see no ocean," he said.

"We're working on that," Groucho indicated the Sahara Desert. "So far all we've got is the beach."

He watched the trio move off to the bridal tent with a sigh of envy. "What a lucky guy!" he murmured wistfully. "Two wives. Any time he's in the mood he can play three-handed rummy."

Groucho was still picturing to himself the delights of three-handed rummy—in fact he had mentally dealt himself out a couple of hands—when the telegram arrived from Governor Galoux. He scanned it rapidly.

"So they want me to take over the Casablanca Hotel!" he exclaimed. The pride of the born Motel-keeper was cut to the quick. "Why, I'll never leave this Motel! I built it up from nothing. It's my old-age annuity—as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. Nobody can take it away from me."

The latter part of this excellent speech was punctuated by the sound of wind—one of those sudden desert storms which are, as every movie fan knows, the bane of the lonely traveller on the Sahara. They're also bad with peanut butter sandwiches. This sandstorm was a first-class job. Even as Groucho turned with a grandiose gesture to indicate the Motel which he had built up from nothing, the tornado swept the whole thing away—archway, office, tents.

Groucho raised his eyebrows. He couldn't raise anything else for, like the camel beside him, he was buried up to his neck in desert sand.

"I've thought the whole proposition over very carefully," he said with that air of decision which marks the big business executive. "I'll take the job."



CHAPTER THREE

JUST where the trains stop in Casablanca the enterprising civic authorities have built a railway station. Strong iron barriers separate the station from the street. The purpose of these barriers is less to prevent passengers from getting away without tickets than to keep the crowd from pinching the train.

For with the arrival of every train a screaming mob of porters and touts mills round the station, Arabs, Berbers, Moors, shouting and gesticulating, tearing luggage out of the hands of tourists, bullying them into patronising certain hotels, selling them souvenirs, Moroccan leatherwork, painted pottery, junk of all kinds.

Among the most dangerous of the pitfalls which beset the innocent newcomer to Casablanca was the Yellow Camel Taxi Service. This institution consisted of half-a-dozen moth-eaten camels and a certain shady-looking individual who called himself Corbaccio. The name Corbaccio, however, fooled the initiated only for a

moment. The briefest glance betrayed that this Corbaccio was none other than Chico Marx.

For some time Chico had been worried by the taxi-meters fitted to the camels he hired out to sensation-seeking visitors. Something was wrong with them. They were registering accurately.

That afternoon Harpo found his friend working hard on these taxi-meters. They greeted each other with enthusiasm, for they both spoke the same language. That is to say, Chico spoke a kind of lower East-end New York wop dialect and Harpo didn't speak at all. Their handshake was elaborate and rather effusive. It required stamina and double joints, inasmuch as Harpo leaned down and insisted on shaking hands somewhat as though he were passing a football backwards between his legs.

This athletic display of cordiality was interrupted by the return of a fat, perspiring tourist aboard the Yellow Camel Taxi Service's best steed—the one that could still walk. Chico ran to assist the customer to dismount.

"Hey, Rusty," he shouted, "give me a hand."

Harpo extended that limp appendage which an anatomist would recognise as his hand. Being sensitive, Chico dropped it in disgust. If his friend suffered from anything it was from having a literal mind. Chico examined the taxi-meter, hastily pulling up the flag.

"That'll be a hundred and thirty francs," he said.

The tourist was relieved to be safely off Chico's camel, but not that relieved.

"What!" he exclaimed in horror. "The meter says thirty francs."

"I don't trust that meter," Chico scowled. "It's crooked. A hundred and thirty francs."

Now it chanced at that moment that Captain Brizzard was passing. The Prefect of Police paused, interested in the transaction. Harpo whistled warningly, but Chico's back was to the policeman. Harpo whistled again—this time with a police whistle which was one of the three hundred and sixty-two oddly assorted objects he always carried about with him in the commodious junk-bag he wore for trousers. This time Chico got the hint.

"Okay, thirty francs," he said. Adaptability was the thing which had kept Chico in business—and at large—for so long.

Brizzard's companion reminded him that the new hotel manager's train would arrive in five minutes, and both men passed on.

"Hey, Rusty, you heara that?" Chico pricked up his ears. "They got a new manager to take the job. Any man take a job like that must be a big sucker."

Harpo nodded vigorously.

"Business is slow. I could use a big sucker, too."

Always accommodating, Harpo immediately produced what he understood his friend to require: a large lollipop.

But the train was arriving. Passengers were already fighting their losing battle against the predatory hordes beating enthusiastically against the station barriers. Chico joined them, like a well-bred hunter hearing the blast of the hunting horn.

Without doubt the most striking of the first batch of arrivals

was the new manager of the Casablanca Hotel. Snaking through the crowd with his cigar, his monstrously improbable moustache and a carpet bag clutched firmly in one hand, Chico picked him out with his unerring instinct to do the wrong thing.

"Anybody here for the Hotel Casablanca?" he chanted seductively, eyeing Groucho. "Anybody here for the Hotel Casablanca? Anybody here. . ."

"Here, boy, I'm going to the hotel."

Chico inspected Groucho critically. "They'll never let you in the hotel."

"Do they let you in?" Groucho was not offended, he merely wanted to know.

"Sure."

"Well, I'll put a stop to that. I'm the new manager."

"Ah, the new manager!" Chico took his hand warmly, pumping it. "The hotel sent me down to welcome you!" He pulled Groucho vigorously away from the clutches of a native porter who wanted to join the party. "You gotta watch out for thesa fellows," he warned. "They take you to the Cleaners."

Groucho had been a long time in the desert and he was suspicious. "What about you?" he asked.

"I take you to the hotel."

"Just what is your racket?"

"I gotta no racket. I make my living with camels. Here, I show you a picture."

Groucho examined the snapshot with interest. "Say, that's a lovely fur coat your wife is wearing."

"That's not my wife, that's a camel." Chico handed him another photograph. "This is my wife."

"You should have married the camel," Groucho suggested. "What do you do with your camels? How do you rent them? By the hour?"

"I just fill them up with water and they go for eight days."

"What do you feed them?"

"Peanuts—it's the healthiest food in the world."

"How do you know?"

"I was a monkey for three years."

Groucho glanced at him doubtfully. "It's been longer than that," he said. From Chico he glanced at Chico's camel. The animal chewed in the time-honoured way camels do chew. "Got another stick of gum on you?" he inquired.

But Chico gave the camel no time to reply. "Go ahead, get on," he urged the new manager of the Casablanca Hotel.

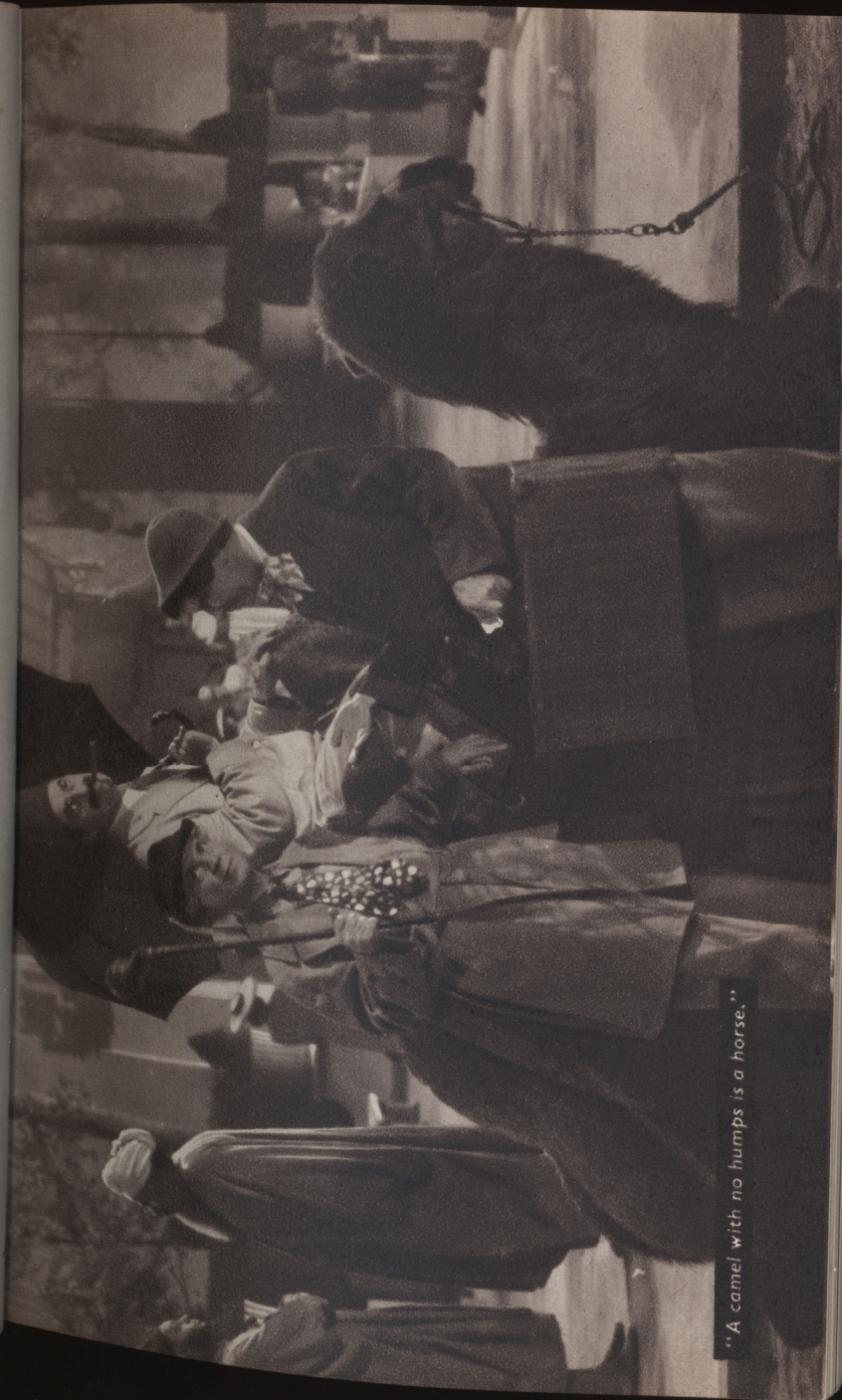
The meter started ticking ominously as Groucho climbed aboard. He listened, then regarded the proprietor of the Yellow Camel Taxi Service dubiously.

"By the way, what are your rates?"

"Twenty francs for a camel with two humps, and ten francs for a camel with one hump."

"What do you charge for a camel with no humps?"

"A camel with no humps is a horse. I gotta horse too, but the horse has a bump."



"A camel with no humps is a horse."



He always liked to lie down.



Pierre and Annette.



"Have you found my toupe?"

A Night in Casablanca

23

Bewildered by these subtle distinctions, Groucho eyed the street a mile or two below him wistfully.

"If I could get back down there," he said, "I'd go that way."

"Don't worry about the price, Boss," Chico reassured him. "Whatever you got—I take."

* * * * *

In the sumptuous lobby of the Casablanca Hotel the hotel staff was drawn up in formal array to welcome the arrival of their new boss. Brizzard himself was inspecting them while Galoux finished the long lecture he had prepared on the respect due to a person of such eminence as the new manager of the Hotel Casablanca.

"Remember," he concluded pompously, "the new manager must be given no cause for discontent. And, er—" he added, clearing his throat, "please let us *not* refer to the, ahem, unfortunate disappearance of the three former managers. . . ."

Outside, Groucho, alias Ronald Kornblow, had safely concluded his hazardous journey from the railway station. Harpo greeted him at the hotel door. Chico, who had led the camel, helped him to the ground. Meanwhile Harpo had taken possession of Groucho's carpet-bag.

"Be careful of that," Groucho yelled. "Everything I own in the world is in that bag!"

The bag chose this moment to flop open.

"Hey!" Chico said in disgust, "that bag is empty."

"That'll give you an idea what I own," Groucho nodded.

Chico returned to business. "That'll be one hundred francs, Boss."

"But the meter says fifty francs."

"Yeh, but I told you. It's double for a camel with two humps."

This was too complicated. Groucho paid up. Behind his back Chico removed one hump from the camel. Detachable humps were his own invention. Harpo, producing a whisk broom, had meanwhile begun violently to brush what remained of Groucho's threadbare suit.

"Hey, get away from me. What's the idea?" the new manager protested. "What do you do anyway?"

Harpo pulled out a red-hot iron from his trousers, wet his forefinger and touched the iron with a little phut.

"That's what he does, Boss," Chico interrupted. "He's a valet."

"But he was trying to undress me."

"That's his business. He dresses and undresses the Count. Rusty's got a very tough job—the Count's got a lot of clothes. He makes sixteen changes a day."

"What's so wonderful about that?" Groucho sneered. "I did that when I was three months old."

In the lobby the staff was still standing rigidly at attention. An instinctive shudder ran through some of the older and more respectable members of the staff as Mr. Ronald Kornblow, shoul-

ders hunched, hands behind his back, zig-zagged cautiously into the lobby. Groucho was determined to make his authority felt from the outset.

"Break it up!" he snapped. "This is a hotel lobby. Isn't there some pool room where you boys can hang out?"

Galoux was the first to recover his equanimity. "M'sieur," he introduced himself courteously, "I am Galoux, Governor-General of this province."

"And I am Brizzard, Chief of Police."

"My name is Ronald Kornblow—I'm the new manager."

"Ah, the new manager!" And Galoux warmly kissed Groucho on both cheeks.

"Ah, Monsieur Kornblow!" And Brizzard repeated the punishment.

Groucho leered at them. "You boys are wasting your time." He raised one coy eyebrow. "I'm going steady." Then, for the first time, the full horror of Brizzard's black beard struck him. "I've seen five o'clock shadow," he confessed, "but this is ridiculous."

"The staff is assembled, M'sieur," Galoux said, "waiting to hear what you expect of them."

"Never mind the staff," Groucho barked. "Assemble the guests. I'll tell them what I expect of them!"

"The guests? What do you expect of them?"

"Courtesy towards the employees," Groucho explained. "They must learn that a kind word will get them further with a bellboy or a chambermaid than a couple of drinks. Of course, a kind word and a couple of drinks will get them still further. . . . And," he added severely, "if it gets them any further than that, it will get them thrown out of the hotel."

"Mr. Kornblow," Brizzard interrupted, "I presume you are ready to step into the manager's shoes?"

"Of course I am. You didn't think I was going to run this joint in my bare feet? . . . By the way," he demanded hopefully, "what's the chances of my getting a room in this joint?"

"It is all arranged," Galoux nodded. "On the fourth floor you will find the manager's suite."

"Good. Tell her I'll be up in a few minutes."

"That is very good."

"You think so?" Groucho grunted. "I thought it was only fair. Right now I'm concerned with the future of this fire-trap."

"What do you suggest?"

"We've got to speed things up." He removed his cigar and crossed to the assembled staff. He addressed the chef in a brisk, businesslike tone of voice. "From now on," he said, "if a guest orders a three-minute egg, we'll give it to him in two minutes. If he orders a two-minute egg we'll give it to him in one minute. And if he orders a one-minute egg—we'll give him a chicken and let him work it out for himself."

"This man is impossible," Galoux murmured sotto voce to Brizzard. Brizzard shrugged.

"Beggars cannot be choosers."

"The next thing I'm going to do," Groucho announced, "is change all the numbers on all the rooms."

"But the guests!" Galoux spluttered. "They will go into the wrong rooms! Think of the confusion!"

"Yeah. But think of the fun!"

"But we mustn't annoy Mr. Kornblow with questions now," Brizzard interposed tactfully. "I presume you are tired with your long trip, Mr. Kornblow. Perhaps you would like to lie down."

Nothing if not literal, the new manager immediately followed the suggestion. He always liked to lie down.

Brizzard and Galoux regarded him lying on the floor at their feet. His eyes were closed and he was evidently asleep. A gendarme entered, saluted smartly and said:

"Sir, the car is waiting to take you to the manager's funeral."

Groucho opened a reproachful eye. "You might," he suggested, "at least wait until I stop breathing."

"I was referring to the former manager, M'sieur," the gendarme hastened to explain.

"All right, Sergeant," Brizzard growled. "All right. Get out." Groucho rose. He regarded the Chief of Police with growing suspicion. Galoux moved uneasily. "M'sieur Kornblow," he said nervously, "perhaps we had better step into your office."

In the manager's office Groucho made himself at home. He flopped down into the swivel chair behind the desk, put his feet on the table, lit his cigar with a handsome silver desk lighter and casually tossed the lighter over his shoulder out of the window.

"Now, gentlemen," he began, "I'm a different man behind a desk, as any stenographer can tell you. What I want to know is why they're burying the last manager—and don't tell me it's because he's dead."

"But you are alarming yourself over nothing," Brizzard said. "Monsieur Rolizoides died a natural death."

"And what about the manager before him?"

"Oh him!" Galoux put in quickly. "We caught him stealing money. We were forced to discharge him."

"I see," Groucho rose abruptly. "You want a manager who doesn't steal money. Good-day, gentlemen."

Brizzard grabbed him just as he was disappearing through the door.

"Please, M'sieur Kornblow," he changed the subject adroitly, "you notice we haven't mentioned anything about your salary."

"You're darned right, I've noticed it!" Groucho growled.

"What about it, kids?"

"You will get five hundred francs a week."

"And what about my laundry?"

"We pick it up once a month."

"If you wait that long you won't be able to pick it up."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE Brass Monkey was a low dive where drinks were supplied, and, for a price, you could see a native girl dance what was euphemistically called a "Specialty Number." To readers who contemplate visiting Casablanca the address will be supplied by the publishers for a modest fee.

This afternoon Pierre was leaning moodily against the bar. He was depressed. He had come for the drink, not the "Specialty Number." He glanced up from his glass to see Annette standing in the door. She rushed up to him breathlessly.

"Darling!" she exclaimed. "Look at this. I found it in the hotel."

And she produced Count Pfefferman's toupet, which one of the hotel chambermaids had discovered on emptying Harpo's vacuum-cleaner. Pierre examined the object with eyes alight. For the label inside the toupet was of startling interest.

It was also of interest to the shifty-eyed bum who leaned at the bar counter beside him. Pierre removed himself to a position where he could study the label more privately.

"Krauss and Company, Berlin!" he read. "And it was made for a Heinrich Stubel!"

"But we have no guest named Stubel at the hotel," Annette frowned in perplexity.

"If you had he's changed his name!" Pierre exclaimed excitedly. "Stubel was a big shot Nazi. He was stationed in Paris."

Annette caught his excitement. "Pierre! Maybe it's the lead you've been waiting for!"

"Maybe." He handed her back the toupet. "Put this back in the Lost and Found department. I don't think Stubel will be stupid enough to claim it, but I don't want to miss a bet."

While Pierre and Annette felt that they had at last stumbled upon a clue, the owner of the lost toupet was pacing the confines of his luxurious suite like a caged panther. His cronies, Kurt and Bea, watched him uneasily.

"Trapped!" Count Pfefferman shouted violently. "Helpless! Trapped in the room all this time! Unable to show my face. This is an animal existence."

"Control yourself, Max," Bea cooed. "Control yourself, she says! Me! Stubel. Defeated by a stupid toupet. A wig. A few strands of hair!"

Bea rose suddenly. "I have an idea," she said. "I'll see you later."

"Be careful," the Count called after her. "Do not arouse suspicion."

He marched petulantly across the room towards the pair of crossed sabres which hung on the wall. He ripped one off and glared at Kurt. Kurt loosened his collar nervously. But the vicissitudes of the Count's rage were less deserving than Kurt. With the

razor-sharp edge of the weapon he flicked the buds off a bunch of roses in a vase.

He was disturbed by a knock on the door. He dropped the sabre and rushed into hiding in the dressing room. Kurt opened the door. It was only Harpo. The count reappeared.

"Have you found my toupet?" he roared.

Harpo nodded with amiable imbecility.

"Where is it? Give it to me!"

Harpo was only trying to be helpful. He did not understand the niceties of toupet construction. He presented the Count with the end of a mop he had found outside in the corridor. To Harpo it seemed a reasonable substitute. The Count not unnaturally exploded.

"Pig!" he screamed, and rather ungratefully beat Harpo over the head with the proffered mop. Kurt, always a sportsman, joined in the fun, striking Harpo viciously across the face. Harpo's response was dignified. He merely handed Kurt his card. Kurt hit him again. Harpo recovered his card and tore it up.

"Kurt!" the Count exclaimed, grasping the meaning of the pantomime. "He wishes to have a duel!"

That was by no means Harpo's idea, but Kurt was delighted. "Wonderful!" he smiled. "It has been so long since Heidelberg." Heidelberg was the University where Kurt had picked up many of the nastier habits, including the skilled use of the sabre.

"You will cut him up a little, Kurt," the Count advised moderately, picking up the two sabres. "I shall enjoy watching. It will soothe me to see a human being in pain."

During this humane speech Harpo had disappeared. He reappeared shortly afterwards, dressed in the bulky paraphernalia of an American baseball catcher—a mask, body guard, shin guards, plus a pair of boxing gloves, in case. Kurt sneered.

"He thinks that will protect him against me—the finest swordsman in Bavaria!"

"We will duel according to tradition," the Count said. "I will officiate." He extended the sabres. "Choose your weapons."

Harpo made what in the circumstance seemed the wisest choice. He took both weapons.

"Only one!" Kurt snarled, recovering the second sabre. "For that you get another cut."

"Now, gentlemen, back to back," the Count clapped his hands in happy boyish anticipation. "When I count three, you walk five paces. Then you turn and defend yourselves."

He arranged the assailants back to back and counted out: "One, two, three . . . Go!"

Kurt marched five paces forward in the approved Heidelberg fashion. Harpo's early training in the art of swordsmanship had taken place in Oshkosh, Missouri. He also marched five paces—only backwards.

Kurt did a snappy Prussian right about-face. "En garde!" he snapped—whatever that meant—and stamped his foot menacingly. He found Harpo's nose almost touching his. Harpo, always willing to learn, imitated the gesture, erring only in one

slight respect. When he stamped his foot he stamped it down on Kurt's.

"Over there!" Kurt screamed a little hysterically.

"He dares to make a fool of you, Kurt," the Count pointed out, somewhat unkindly.

"We shall see." And Kurt advanced on the startled Harpo with an evil leer. With a neat flick of his sabre he cut away the straps which maintained Harpo's protective paraphernalia in place, while the Count applauded.

"Capital! Now a little blood."

Thus encouraged, Kurt advanced. He made a swipe at Harpo's sabre. Harpo, less encouraged, hastily retired to the far corner of the room, where he crossed his fingers, which, according to the duelling laws of Oshkosh, Missouri, meant he was immune from further attack.

But Kurt was less familiar with these rules. With a terrifying scowl he leapt on his prey. Harpo scowled back; and Harpo's scowl made the average scowl look like the sentimental simpering of a schoolgirl. Sabres clashed. Sparks flew. Harpo whistled. He meant "time out."

Kurt paused, bewildered, as well he might be. Harpo seized the opportunity of sharpening the edge of his sabre across Kurt's as one sharpens a carving knife by drawing it across another carving knife. He tested the blade with a hair plucked from his chest.

Kurt stamped furiously on the floor and hacked away. Harpo stamped on Kurt's foot again.

"For that I run you through, you swine," Kurt snarled.

"First some blood," the Count encouraged. "Let me see some blood."

Nothing would have suited Kurt better, but in order to draw blood it was first necessary to catch Harpo. For the next five minutes Count Pfefferman's luxurious suite was the scene of much rushing about and spilling of furniture, though not of spilling of blood.

Kurt was getting a little out of breath. Life in Casablanca had played havoc with his constitution.

"Ach, Kurt," the Count said sadly, "perhaps it has been *too* long since Heidelberg! Where is his blood?" The Count on the subject of blood had a one-track mind.

Kurt redoubled his efforts. Again the sparks flew, sabres crossed, slashed, parried, made such a din that it was lucky the neighbours didn't complain.

Harpo, frankly, was getting a little bored with the whole business. To his simple taste sword-play seemed considerably less amusing than a good baseball match. He leaned an arm against the door-sill to support his growing ennui. With his spare arm he continued to parry Kurt's sabre.

He crossed his legs to be more comfortable. Mental weariness assailed him. He suppressed a yawn with difficulty. Still automatically parrying Kurt's thrusts at him, he removed an apple from his pocket with his spare hand, held it out for Kurt's sabre

to halve, and thrust the remaining half in his mouth, munching thoughtfully.

Kurt slashed at him with growing abandon. Heidelberg hadn't been a bit like this. Harpo yawned profoundly.

Minutes passed, half an hour, an hour, and still the titanic duel continued. Kurt was the shadow of his former self. Visibly he began to weaken. Harpo would have fallen asleep long since had he not conserved his energy by leaning against the edge of the door.

Kurt was ashen grey. He decided in that awful moment to give up smoking immediately. Then his knees sagged, gave way. Physically worn out, he tottered, crumpled and sprawled exhausted on to the carpet.

* * * * *

It will be remembered that the lovely Beatrice Reiner had left the Count's suite some time earlier, alleging mysteriously that she "had an idea." Be that as it may, she descended to the lobby, where she found the new manager. Anyway—still harping on her idea—it makes little difference. Bea had much better things than ideas.

Groucho observed what we mean as he glanced up from the desk, behind which he was contentedly puffing a cigar. He observed, for instance, her cigarette-holder, a slick little ivory job about a yard long, and he observed that she was a lady of highly developed personality.

Possibly he was slower to observe her slim, beautifully curved figure, her slinking gait, her languorous movements, her dark eyes full of promise and mystery—if you could call it mystery. Possibly he didn't notice her soft dreamy expression, the full, sweet mouth, the smooth rounded arms and bare shoulders, the rise and fall of her breast, the lingering fragrance of her seductive perfume.

It's possible. But it's most unlikely. After all, he wasn't dead. She slunk slowly past his desk, giving him a broadside view, then back again, giving him the other broadside. Both struck home with all guns. Bea's ideas weren't so bad after all. She brushed past the desk, hesitated, and draped herself against it. Groucho leaned forward, breathing asthmatically.

She removed a packet of cigarettes from her handbag and chose one with slim fingers.

"Cigarette?" she suggested, by way of making conversation.

But Groucho wasn't the kind of man anybody could pick up. Besides, he hadn't been formally introduced to this woman.

"No thanks," he said proudly. "Cigar?"

She refused the proffered cigar graciously.

"Match?" he queried. After all, as manager he had to be polite to the guests. He lighted the far end of the lengthy holder.

"How are things down at the other end?" he inquired, interested. Bea blew a flirtatious puff of smoke in Groucho's face. He retaliated with a stream of cigar smoke. Not knowing when to

stop, she puffed again into his face. He set up a counter smoke-screen.

"This is like living in Pittsburgh," he said.

"I'm Beatrice Reiner. I stop at the hotel."

"I'm the manager. I stop at nothing."

"I'm looking for something," she murmured.

He eyed her suggestively. "Aren't we all?" he sighed.

"I lost a diamond clip, and I thought it might have turned up in the Lost and Found department." This sounded more convincing than saying she was looking for a lost toupet.

"Well, slink yourself over here and I'll take a look," he said, making for the Lost and Found department across the room. "If I can't find the clip I might interest you in something else." And he raised his eyebrows in the kind of leer which makes the average respectable girl call a policeman.

He rummaged in a drawer in the Lost and Found department, emerging with a box of odd, assorted articles. "Here's something novel—three earrings." He screwed up his face thoughtfully. "Now who do I know with three ears?"

"Will you please look for my clip? I'm very anxious to find it."

"You think you lost something!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Get a load of this—a toupet!"

Bea was all innocence. "Now who could have lost that?"

"Some guy must've blown his top."

Bea shrank back from Groucho's gaze. "Your eyes," she murmured, "go through me like hot coals."

"Look—let's forget about Pittsburgh," he said impulsively. "Bea—I think you're one of the most beautiful women I've ever met."

She looked pleased. "Do you really?"

"No. But I don't mind lying if it'll get me somewhere."

She dropped her voice shyly. "I'll be in the Supper Club to-night. . . ."

"In the Supper Club?"

"Yes. . . . Will you join me?"

"Why—are you coming apart?"

"Oh, come on now," she pouted, "you wouldn't say 'no' to a lady?"

"I don't know why not—they're always saying 'no' to me."

"Come down to the Supper Club to-night and I'll sing some opera," she tempted him, though god knows why she thought opera was tempting. But she had to say something to cover up the fact that she had just slipped the famous lost toupet into her handbag. "Do you know the Barber of Seville?"

"I used to shave his father."

She moved away seductively. "Remember," she called back with an encouraging little smile, "I shall be singing for you."

"You don't have to sing for me," he said gallantly, "just whistle." And watching the slinky satin back view of the languorous Bea Reiner as she oozed from the room, he reflected aloud: "That reminds me. I must get my watch fixed."

CHAPTER FIVE

IF you've ever been to a night club you will know what the Supper Club of the Casablanca Hotel was like. If you've never been to a night club you will have a good chance of paying your Income Tax this year.

It is probable that Count Pfefferman had never in his life done anything so legal as paying his Income Tax. Anyway, complete with toupet again, there he was that evening guzzling at the Casablanca Supper Club, and running up the kind of bill which made it absolutely imperative that he should discover the hidden Nazi loot which he believed to be concealed somewhere within the Casablanca Hotel.

A negro band had just finished a hot little number, with Bea singing away rather nicely, and there was a bit of peace again, so that you could hear the fashionable gathering sucking up the *consommé*. Champagne bottles popped. Waiters insulted guests. The gaiety was at its height.

When her song was finished Bea bowed prettily and approached Count Pfefferman's table on the edge of the dance floor. He rose with old world gallantry, wiped the soup off his mouth and kissed her hand.

"We take no more chances with Kornblow," he muttered. "We get rid of him to-night."

"To-night?" Bea whispered.

"Make a rendezvous with him later—some quiet corner away from the hotel. Say—eleven o'clock."

"Exactly what corner?" Bea, who liked to get these things straight, inquired.

"Rue Lafayette. Emile will drive the car. It will look like an accident."

She nodded, submitted her hand again to the ordeal of being kissed, and withdrew.

Outside the Supper Club a foyer served as a kind of waiting room for the people who were waiting for tables in the club. Like the club itself, this foyer also was packed with hopeful guests.

Lieutenant Pierre Delbart mingled inconspicuously with these guests, sipping a thoughtful cocktail. He still had no clue to the owner of Stubel's toupet. While he drank his cocktail he became aware of a half familiar face watching him. A moment's thought recalled the face. It was that of the shifty-eyed individual who had stood beside him earlier to-day at the bar of the Brass Monkey.

Obviously the fellow wanted a word with him. Pierre followed him out into the corridor.

"What is it?" Pierre demanded briefly.

"Not so quick, my friend," the other said smoothly. "It costs money."

"You know I'm broke," Pierre grunted.

"I also know that you are looking for a man who wears a toupet."

Pierre's interest quickened. "You know who he is?"

The other smiled servilely. "The roulette wheel has been unkind to-night, but I should like to try again. It would only take a few hundred francs."

Pierre seized the little squirt by the collar. "Look! I'll pay you. I promise."

"The croupier does not accept promises." He wriggled himself free from Pierre's grasp. "If you *should* be fortunate enough to find a few hundred francs I will be at the Brass Monkey." And he slithered away before Pierre could detain him.

Pierre would have followed, but Chico and Harpo appeared. They had witnessed the scene with sympathy.

"Whatssamatter, Pierre?" Chico asked. "You needa money?"

"Don't worry," Pierre smiled, "I'll get what I want out of that rat without money."

Chico watched Pierre disappear. "He'll never get anything from that rat without money," he reflected sadly. "That rat is just like me." With Harpo he moved off towards the crowd waiting to get into the Supper Club.

"We gotta get some money for Pierre," he said. "You gotta any money?"

Harpo hadn't, but very probably some of the expensively dressed waiting guests had, so he investigated a neighbouring pocket or two to find out. Chico restrained him, smitten by one of his rare attacks of honesty.

"No, we don't want to get it that way."

They watched the head waiter, who was enjoying what head waiters most delight in—refusing people tables.

"But, M'sieur," he was saying to a prosperous-looking couple, "as you can see—there is no more room in the Club."

A banknote swiftly exchanged owners, and as the head waiter pocketed it his manner softened strangely.

"But, of course, M'sieur, I understand," he continued suavely, "there is always room for one more. Follow me, please."

Harpo and Chico watched the scene goggle-eyed as the head waiter went to a stack of folded emergency tables, picked up one and led the prosperous couple to the dance floor.

"I think we get some money for Pierre," Chico said. "Hey, Mista, you wanta table?"

"Why, yes," the gentleman thus addressed answered promptly. "It'll costa you money."

The gentleman produced the money. Chico and Harpo produced the table. They preceded the gentleman into the scrum. They pushed away a few occupied tables from the edge of the dance floor and installed the customer to his apparent satisfaction. It was easy—anybody can make money.

They returned to the foyer to make some more. They found Groucho snaking his way cautiously towards the Supper Club, bent on hearing the Barber of Seville. He approached the velvet

rope which separated the foyer from the Supper Club. He jumped the rope and turned to Chico contemptuously.

"Put that rope up to six feet," he said. "Any schoolboy can jump over that."

Chico shook his head discouragingly. "Hey, boss," he warned, "to get a table in there you gotta be a big name."

"Well, I certainly should be able to get it. I've been called some of the biggest names you ever heard."

The head waiter's approach interrupted further conversation.

"Ah—M'sieur Kornblow—and how can I serve you?" he asked politely.

"On rye bread with plenty of lettuce—and take me to Miss Reiner's table."

"Follow me, please."

The head waiter led the way to the table Bea shared with the Count, though probably Groucho could have found it himself.

"Ah," Groucho said suavely with old world courtesy, "Miss Reiner!"

Taking advantage of the hand-kissing racket, he bent over Bea's hand affectionately. Unfortunately for the dignity of this gesture, Chico and Harpo had meanwhile found more customers, more folding tables and more folding chairs. These they were attempting to manipulate just behind Groucho's back. Naturally they knocked him over.

He saved himself from falling by placing one hand gracefully into Count Pfefferman's soup.

"I usually put my foot in it," Groucho explained apologetically. But his hand had done all right. The Count's soup, a rich green St. Germain, the recipe for which may be found in the current edition of Mrs. Beeton, had splashed beautifully all over the Count's boiled shirt.

"You swine!" roared the Count. "Look what you've done to my shirt!"

"Sorry," Groucho said. "But you can hardly notice it—unless you're looking for a plate of soup."

But the head waiter was horrified. "Count Pfefferman!" he exclaimed, carefully pronouncing all three "f's." "How terrible! Come with me to the kitchen. I will fix it."

"I hope I'm not driving you away," Groucho said, swarming into the Count's seat and edging enthusiastically towards Bea. The Count retired in dudgeon. "Not very sporting of him to eat and run like that," Groucho said to Bea. "You'll probably get stuck with the bill."

He seized her hand and stroked it sentimentally. Bea aroused all that was tenderest in the heart of Groucho.

"How happy we could be," he murmured dreamily. "Can't you just see a little white cottage with green shutters? I'm coming home from work and you—you're standing at the garden gate."

"Yes . . ." she sighed prettily.

"Well, get back into the kitchen!" he snapped angrily. "I want my supper on the table."

"I'm terribly thirsty," Bea said.
 "What would you like to drink?"
 "Champagne."
 "Any particular kind?"
 "Mumm's '28."

"I don't care how old your mother is—what kind of champagne do you want?" This woman couldn't keep to the point.

Later they danced. Maybe they left it a bit too late. For by this time Harpo and Chico had cleaned up a fortune. The Supper Club had already been crowded even before they had gone into the extra-table business. Now the place looked a little like Paddington Station during a Bank Holiday, except that there weren't so many perambulators. Even old experienced night club habitués were giving up the struggle. You had to be made of iron to stand up to that scrimmage.

Groucho and Bea rhumbaed obliviously in the one square inch of remaining floor. Romance had blinded them. There was starlight in their eyes.

"I remember," Groucho said reminiscently, "when lots of this space around here used to be dance floor . . . I'd ask you to sit the next one out—if we could get out."

"Let's stop dancing," Bea suggested.

"I'm not dancing. I'm trying to get my feet out of a champagne bucket."

The invitation in Bea's eyes was irresistible, assuming that Groucho wished to resist—which would be assuming too much.

"Let's go somewhere where we can be alone," she murmured.

"If I didn't need your voice," he said, "I'd have sworn I said that."

"Meet me at the corner of Rue Lafayette at eleven," she whispered.

"That's the best idea since the zipper," he approved.

Bea slipped from his arms and wriggled away through a narrow passage between the tables. This passage, alas! was immediately closed by Harpo and yet another folding table. Hemmed in, Groucho dropped to his hands and knees and crawled for safety, causing a certain amount of misunderstanding beneath table *en route*.

But he regained the street in safety and in one piece. Which is considerably fewer pieces that he returned in from that promising rendezvous with the entrancing Beatrice Reiner.

* * * * *

An hour later Annette met Pierre on the steps outside the Hotel Casablanca. Annette's agitation was obvious.

"Pierre," she stammered, "something has happened. The toupet is gone!"

"Who. . . ?"

"I don't know," she admitted in distress. "I thought I'd ask Mr. Kornblow, but I can't find him anywhere."

The uniformed doorman intervened. "Mr. Kornblow went out

about an hour ago, Miss," he informed her. "He asked me to direct him to the corner of the Rue Lafayette."

Pierre seized Annette's arm urgently. "Come on," he said.

But they had not gone a dozen paces before they met the man they were looking for. Perhaps Groucho would be more accurately described as the wreck of the man they were looking for. Battered, torn, dilapidated, he had been through hell—and he looked it.

"Mr. Kornblow!" Annette exclaimed, not yet observing these details. "Thank heaven you're all right!"

"What do you mean all right?" Groucho protested. "I got stood up by a woman and knocked down by a car."

"What happened?"

"These Casablanca drivers are terrible. He missed me three times. I finally climbed a palm tree and he hit that instead."

"A palm tree!" Annette tried not to laugh.

"Yes," Groucho grumbled. "Until I saw you two I thought every date in town was broken."

Annette introduced Pierre. "I'd like you to meet my—my fiancé—Lieutenant Delbart."

Groucho sized Pierre up as they shook hands.

"Fiancé, eh?" he said. "Why don't you two love birds get married?"

Pierre gesticulated hopelessly. "Marriage is impossible."

"Only after you're married," Groucho pointed out.

"It's a long story, Mr. Kornblow," Pierre smiled.

And then he told the hotel manager the tale of crash-landing and the hidden Nazi loot.



CHAPTER SIX

NEXT day in Count Pfefferman's suite the post-mortem took place. The driver of the car which last night had missed Groucho three times and only succeeded in hitting the palm tree was trying to talk himself out of it.

"But, Count," he was saying, "he darted up the tree like a monkey—and after I hit it the car was demolished. What else could I do?"

"Millions!" the Count raged. "Right in our reach—and we can't get our hands on it."

He dismissed the driver curtly. Something else would have to be tried. Clearly the first thing was to remove the new hotel manager and get the job himself. Don't ask why—that's the way the Count's mind worked.

"Bea," he said suddenly, "I have an idea. If I were to find Kornblow with you—in your room!" His lips twisted cynically. "I could be the outraged fiancé. I could, as the Americans say, bump him off. In self-defence, of course. . . ."

Bea nodded eagerly. "Perfect, Max! He's most eager to be

alone with me." And that was one of the truest things Beatrice ever said.

Harpo, ear at the keyhole—as usual—listened to this dastardly scheme with horror. Dropping mop and pail, he bolted like a frightened colt. He cascaded down the stairs, shot through the lobby, tore through the main entrance and rushed wildly down the garden path. There he found his pal Chico. He stopped breathlessly.

"Hey, Rusty. Who you looking for?" Chico inquired.

By this time Chico ought to have known better than to ask Harpo a direct question. Harpo's means of communication were apt to be exhausting. In reply he whistled shrilly and drew a finger across his upper lip.

"Buffalo Bill?" Chico suggested.

Harpo shook his head violently and repeated the gesture.

"Fellah eating water melon?" Chico ventured.

Harpo stamped on Chico's foot; then blew furiously.

"Ouch, my corn!" Chico's exclamation gave him a clue.

"Corn—corn—you blow? . . . Oh, Kornblow. . . . You're looking for Mr. Kornblow?"

Harpo whistled an excited affirmative. Then he went into a wild pantomime of a man eating soup.

"Soup!" Chico guessed. "Soup—you got the soup for Kornblow?"

Harpo nodded with imbecile delight and went on to imitate a Chinese boy eating with chopsticks. Only Chico could have got this.

"Chinese boy?" he said. Harpo gave an encore. "Chop suey? Chow mein? Rice?"

Harpo whistled. Rice it was.

"Rice—soup," Chico recapitulated. "Soup—rice. Soup—rice. Oh—surprise. You gotta surprise for him! Oh, I'm a smart fellah. . . . What's the surprise?"

Harpo raised an imaginary gun to his shoulder and fired.

"Going shooting? Someone going to shoot him? Hang him?"

Harpo shook his head. He shook his bottom.

"Bumps-a-daisy," Chico reflected. "Someone going to bump him off!"

Harpo whistled.

"Who is going to do it?" Chico asked.

Harpo raised his arm. He went through the motion of a referee at a boxing match counting out the victim.

"You count, you count, count. Oh, the Count's going to do it! Where's he going to do it? On the roof?"

Harpo knocked at a fanciful door, opened it and stepped inside.

"You knock on door," Chico interrupted, "you open door. you step inside, you're in the room. Oh—in a room he's going to do it! Whose room?"

Harpo's face assumed an expression of simpering fatuity. He swayed his body in rippling, snake-like movements.

"A snake? A big snake?"

Harpo continued the motion, coyly raising one trouserleg.

"A garter snake!"

Harpo repeated the pantomime frantically.

"No, no, that's no snake," Chico sighed. "That's a lady. In a lady's room? Did you go in the room? Were you there? No? Why not?"

Harpo barked. He peered. He rubbed his knees.

"Peek?" Chico ventured wildly. "Knees? Peek—knees. Oh! Pekinese—the lady's got a Pekinese dog!"

Harpo whistled affirmatively.

"What's her name? What's the lady's name?"

Harpo's hand disappeared into his cavernous trousers and reappeared with a rose. Chico smelled it.

"Rose? The lady's name is Rose?"

Harpo shook his head and pranced round the rose, making strange buzzing sounds.

"That sounds like a slow leak," Chico said unhelpfully. The buzzing increased. "Airplane," Chico suggested. "The lady's name is Airplane?"

The buzzing grew to tremendous proportions.

"Bomber 'plane?" Chico persisted. "Bomber 'plane? Black Widow? B-29?"

Harpo encouraged this somewhat far-fetched effort.

"B-29," Chico repeated. "B . . . B . . . B . . . B . . ." Harpo had gagged him before he could go further.

"Just B?"

Harpo nodded excitedly and began to wring out an imaginary towel.

"You twist," Chico translated. "Twist—twist? Bee—twist. Bee—twist. Oh! Beatrice!"

Harpo whistled triumphantly. It was really very simple. If your physical stamina could stand up to it you could have long, intimate chats this way.

"Come on," Chico grabbed his companion's arm, "we gotta find Mr. Kornblow!"

Mr. Kornblow was behind the registration desk as they burst into the lobby. So was the Count. They stopped dead in their tracks until the Count had finished speaking with Groucho.

"You will be good enough to arrange a place for me," he was saying to the manager, "on the evening 'plane for Tunis."

"Tunis, eh?" Groucho repeated, suspiciously. "There are some beautiful women in Tunis."

"I'm not interested in beautiful women." The Count was all hauteur.

"In that case," Groucho advised, "look up some of the women I've taken out."

But the Count did not care for idle gossip. "Just see to it that I get my reservation," he said, passing on with dignity.

When he had gone, Harpo and Chico descended on Groucho.

"Hey, boss," Chico said, "Rusty's gotta something to tell you."

Harpo nodded wildly. He whistled. He drew a finger across his upper lip. He stamped, he blew. He drank soup. He ate

rice. He fired a gun, he wriggled his hips. He counted and knocked on doors. He revealed his sock suspenders, he barked,

peered and rubbed his knees. He buzzed and produced roses.

All of this he did with bewildering rapidity—clearly he was a little hysterical. But it took more than that to bewilder Groucho.

"I'll take one of those," he said, though he was not really absolutely certain what Harpo was selling.

The three retired into the manager's private office, where Chico explained the whole business in English—if you could call it English.

"Boss," he said, "you're in danger. Your life's hanging by a thread."

"So are my pants," Groucho pointed out.

"You gonna get killed."

"How do you know?"

"It's all over the hotel. Everybody knows except you."

"I wish they'd tell me these things," Groucho complained, a little petulantly. "I don't mind being killed, but I resent hearing it from a character whose head comes to a point."

"Maybe," Chico suggested, "they'd like to surprise you."

Groucho simpered. "Well, I'd like to know how to dress."

"Oh, you look fine, boss—you're dressed to kill. But what you need is a good bodyguard."

"What I need is a good body. The one I've got isn't worth guarding. . . . By the way," he added, deeply suspicious suddenly, "since when are you a bodyguard? I thought you were in the camel business."

Chico shrugged expansively. "In the daytime I'm in the camel business," he explained; "at night I'm a bodyguard."

"What happens if I get shot during the day?"

"I give you a free ride on my camel," Chico offered generously.

"You know, I could keep you alive for fifty francs a week."

"It isn't worth it."

"You can't take it with you."

"Well, I'm not going to leave it lying around here."

"If I'm your bodyguard I'll watch you like a mother watches a baby."

Groucho's mind wandered off to pleasanter subjects. "Is the mother pretty?" he inquired.

"What's the difference?"

"There's a lot of difference. If the mother's pretty I'll watch the mother and you can watch the baby."

"I still say you need a bodyguard. Suppose some big gorilla grabs hold of you?"

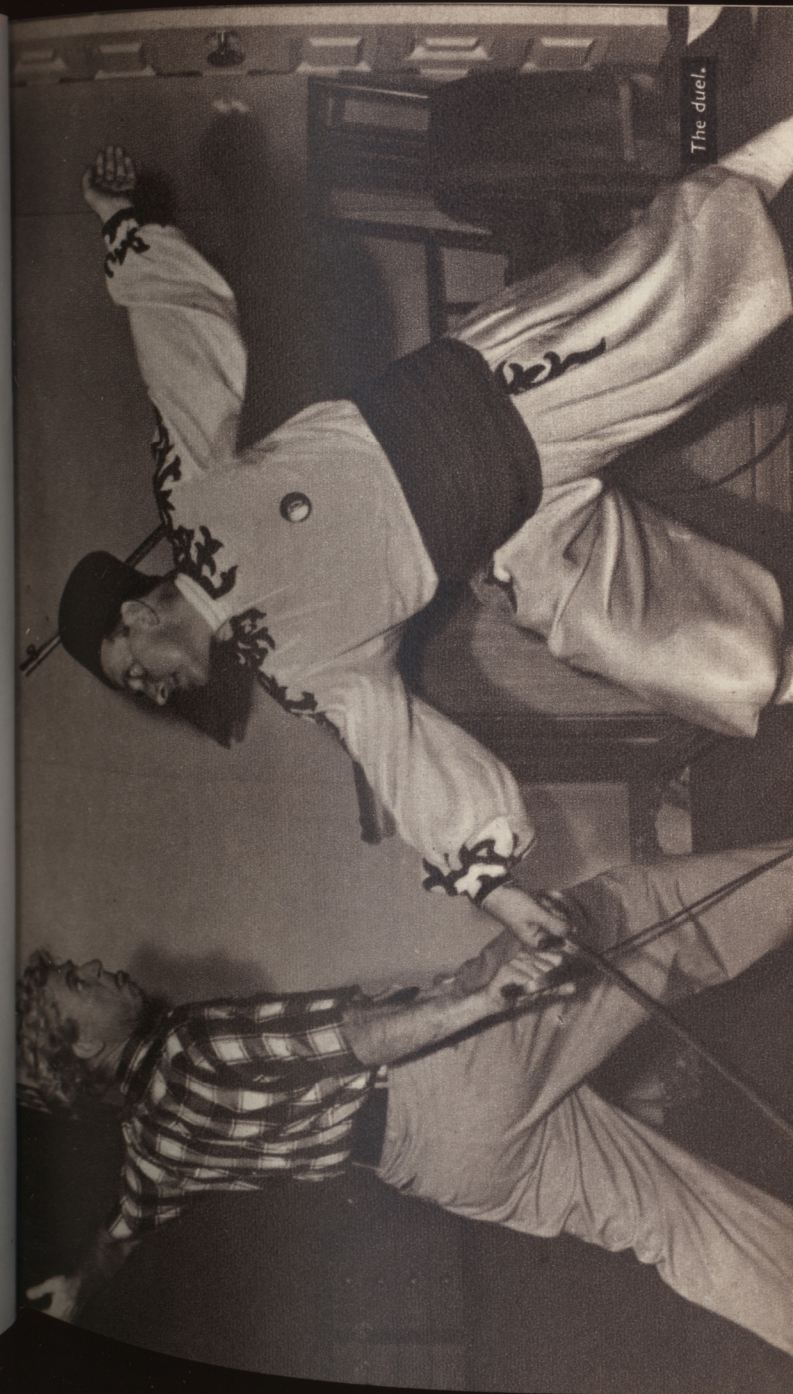
"I'm not afraid of a gorilla," Groucho said. "I could beat him with one hand tied. Of course, if he had both hands tied I'd do an even better job."

"I'm telling you it could happen to you any time. Suppose you're in bed to-night and somebody shoots you through the keyhole?"

"I'd stuff the keyhole."

"Yeah?" Chico sneered. "Then how are you going to look at the blonde in the next room?"

"How do you know there's a blonde in the next room?" Groucho inquired, interested.



The duel.



"Your eyes go through even the best coats."



"Wouldn't it be nice if they ate each other up?"



"Shall we say in half an hour?"

"I got a keyhole too."

"Look!" Groucho said angrily, "are you implying that I would stoop to look through a keyhole? I'm interested in higher things—I look through transoms."

"Come on, let's forget about women," Chico growled.

"All right," Groucho agreed, "but you'd better think of an awfully good substitute."

"Look, boss, you don't take this thing seriously enough. Suppose you're out with a beautiful redhead and you just left her, and now you're walking home like this. . . ." He demonstrated the jaunty way he normally walked home on leaving beautiful redheads.

"When I leave a beautiful redhead I walk home like this. . . ."

Groucho hurried across the room, and then, slowing down to a snail's pace, he added in confession: "Sometimes I walk home like this."

"What's the difference? You walk like this—you walk like that."

"There's a lot of difference!" Groucho was rightly irritated.

"I'm the one that's coming home from the redhead."

"Sure," Chico conceded, "you're going home minding your own business. When a jitsu-jitsu feller grabs you. He breaks your arms, he breaks your legs, he breaks your neck. . . ."

"Well, it looks like I'm getting all the breaks."

Chico, to clinch his line of sales talk, suddenly pounced on Groucho. He merely wanted to demonstrate the perils of walking home from dates with redheads without the insurance of a bodyguard.

A short, sharp struggle ensued. When arms, legs, etcetera, were sorted out again from the struggling heap on the manager's floor, Chico was down and Groucho was on top of him.

"See," Chico panted, driving home his argument, "he's got you down."

"He's got me down?" Groucho ejaculated from his superior position. "What are you doing down there?"

"That's not me. That's you."

"Is it? Then who is this lying on top of you?"

"That's not me," Chico admitted, "that's the jitsu-jitsu feller."

"Then where are you?"

"I'm not here at all."

"Then if you're not here, this floor is awfully bumpy."

"See the danger?" Chico persisted. "See what the jitsu-jitsu feller does to you? You can't even move your leg."

"I can't, eh?" Groucho's pride was cut to the quick. He wagged a leg defiantly. "How about this?"

"That's not your leg."

Groucho prodded Chico's leg. The argument was getting a bit subtle and he was getting confused.

"Then how about this one?" he inquired.

"That's not your leg either," Chico told him. "That's the jitsu-jitsu feller's leg."

"All right, then how about this leg?" Groucho tried one of his own this time.

"Say, how many legs you got?"

"Three, unless one of them is yours."

"I still say some of those legs aren't yours."

"All right, for the sake of argument, let's say I haven't got any legs. I walked in here on my hands. . . . You satisfied?"

"Well," Chico began doubtfully, "I don't. . . ."

"Okay," Groucho interrupted impatiently, "then answer me one question—who did I buy those shoes for yesterday?"

They picked themselves up and brushed off their clothes. But Chico still wished to make his point clear.

"Boss," he began again, "you don't take this serious enough. Now just suppose you're walking down a dark street and a feller comes up behind you and grabs you by the throat. . . ."

Groucho listened entranced. "Ah," he said, entering into the spirit of the thing, "and throws me like this. . . .?"

In his enthusiasm he had seized Chico by the throat. He lifted him from the ground and flung him against the wall. Chico crashed through a table and came up with a plunk against the wall. Chico shook himself and regarded Groucho gloomily.

"That could never happen to you if I was your bodyguard," he said.

"But it just happened to you."

"I ain't got no bodyguard."

Groucho was deeply impressed by this line of argument, the logic of which was unassailable. He leaned down and gathered Chico from the floor by the throat.

"Then you mean if you were my bodyguard," he said, "I couldn't get choked like this?" And to demonstrate the question more graphically he again hurled Chico against the wall.

Chico nodded. "I'm positive," he said.

"Then it's a deal," Groucho agreed, leaning down to shake hands heartily with his new bodyguard.

But Chico had fainted.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HARPO was wandering aimlessly through the lobby. Just why the authorities permitted Harpo to wander unescorted through a joint like the Casablanca Hotel is one of those unsolved mysteries. But that's the way it was.

A beautiful blonde who didn't know any better was also walking through the lobby. Harpo saw her. She saw Harpo. She was dumb, but not that dumb—she started, teetering along on her high heels at a nervously quickened pace. Harpo's small eyes glinted lasciviously. An imbecile smile lighted up his features if you could call them features. He edged after her.

She increased her pace. Fear clutched at her heart-strings. Harpo clutched at her apron strings. Panic seized her and Harpo would very much have liked to do likewise. But a complication

arose. As the blonde fled screaming, a second blonde appeared. Either the second blonde was the first blonde's twin or else all blondes look exactly alike—which is heresy. Anyway, the phenomenon shook Harpo. He stopped dead in his tracks, stared at the second blonde and smiled. She reacted violently to that smile, sprinting for her life.

Harpo swarmed after her, aglow with lechery. The blonde's honour was saved by a coincidence, a counter-attraction, as it were. For as she fled and he, like Pan, pursued, a waiter passed between them. The waiter was carrying a huge silver tray which was succulently laden with delicate edibles. A handsome candelabra rested on the tray; the candles were ablaze with light.

Harpo passed a gluttonous tongue over his lips, sniffed, veered off from his blonde-chase and followed the waiter instead. The waiter went to the manager's private office, where Chico—the newly-hired bodyguard—was standing faithfully on duty.

"The manager's luncheon," the waiter announced.

"Okay," Chico growled, "you can go in." He saw Harpo. "Whatsa matter, Rusty?" he asked kindly. "You hungry?"

The question was rhetorical. "I getta you some lunch."

Both followed the waiter's tray into Groucho's office.

"It's about time," Groucho looked up from his desk. "I'm starved. I ordered lunch over an hour ago." He eyed Chico and Harpo uneasily. "And now, if you fellows will excuse me. . . ."

He herded them out of the room hastily, tucked his napkin under his collar and addressed himself to the luncheon tray. But it was too good to last. Harpo and Chico immediately reappeared.

"You can't eat that lunch, boss," Chico shouted. "The manager before you was poisoned."

"This lunch doesn't look any more poisonous than any other hotel food," Groucho said.

"Boss, what you need is a guinea pig."

Groucho cut into a tender slab of steak. "You eat the guinea pig," he said, "I'll stick to this."

"I mean a human guinea pig," his bodyguard explained.

"Someone to test the food." He jerked a thumb towards Harpo.

"He's a human guinea pig."

"He looks like a pig all right," Groucho admitted, raising a fork to his mouth. "But he doesn't look human."

Chico deftly removed the morsel of steak from Groucho's fork and tossed it to Harpo. Harpo caught it in his mouth and flapped his paws together like a trained seal asking for more.

"That's the seal of good housekeeping," Groucho remarked, admiringly.

Chico spun the table around so that the tray landed up in front of Harpo. Harpo fell on it with zest.

"Hey, wait a minute."

Groucho was hungry and was ready to fight for his food if necessary. He managed to rescue a morsel or two from the ravenous maw of Harpo. But before he could eat Harpo was writhing in the death agonies of a poisoned man.

Groucho replaced the food quickly. Harpo stopped writhing, but he didn't stop eating.

"That's the first guinea pig I ever saw with jet propulsion," Groucho commented.

"Hey, Rusty," Chico suggested generously, "you wanta give something to Mr. Kornblow?"

Harpo was always willing to share with a fellow-creature. He handed Groucho a burning candle.

"No thanks—they give me heartburn."

Harpo recovered the rejected candle, removed the flaming wick neatly, bit a hearty mouthful of the wax, chewed, swallowed, and replaced the burning wick.

"He just ate a light lunch," Chico explained. He examined the champagne bottle on the tray. "It's empty!" he yelled.

Groucho nodded. "It must be a dry champagne." He watched Harpo with growing wonder, not unmingled with admiration. "He's liable to spoil his appetite. . . . At least, let me have some spinach—I could use the iron."

Harpo reached into his trousers and handed Groucho a flat-iron.

"Don't I get anything to wash this down with?"

Harpo obliged—with an inkwell. Groucho refused it. Harpo therefore gulped down the ink himself.

"Do you mind opening your mouth?" Groucho asked, "so I can fill my fountain-pen."

The phone rang. All three scrambled for it, but Harpo got there first. He lifted the receiver, listened interestedly, sprinkled the instrument liberally with salt from the salt cellar and hung up.

"Who was that?" Groucho demanded.

Chico pitied the manager's obtuseness. "Salt Lake City," he explained patiently.

Groucho by this time had abandoned all hope of his luncheon. Instead he poured himself out a cup of coffee. But Harpo promptly grabbed it, nibbling the saucer. Finding this to his taste, he consumed the saucer, the contents of the cup, and finally the cup itself.

"If the coffee doesn't keep him awake, the cup and saucer will," Groucho said.

He observed that his two companions were getting into difficulties with a thin bread stick. Chico was consuming one end of it, Harpo the other. Each ate rapidly towards the middle. "Wouldn't it be nice," Groucho mused aloud, "if they ate each other up?"

He rummaged through the debris on the tray which had once been his luncheon. Nothing but bones and crumbs remained. Groucho sighed luxuriously, put his feet on the desk and unwrapped a cigar.

"Well, there's nothing like a cigar after a hearty meal," he said.

"You want a light, boss?"

Groucho shook his head. "I'm not going to smoke it," he said. "I'm going to eat it." And he wolfed down the cigar ravenously.

* * * * *

That afternoon life in the Casablanca Hotel had resumed its normal smooth routine. Harpo, refreshed by his excellent luncheon, was again wandering in the lobby. He was wearing a shoe of his own special design. This had a convenient little flap where the sole ought to have been, which could be pulled up by means of string, thus permitting him to brush into the shoe cigarette butts, matches, etc., without having to stoop down.

Groucho, behind the reception desk, watched the gadget in operation. It struck him as a good idea. Always a man to encourage originality in his employees, he tossed the lighted butt of his cigar on to the floor in front of Harpo.

"Here," he called, "here's a hot-foot on the house!"

Harpo swept it into his shoe. He jumped. He ran to a table, seized a syphon and squirted sodawater into his shoe to put the fire out. A fountain of water spurted up from his shoe. Harpo watched fascinated. He removed a glass ball from his pocket and dropped it on top of the fountain of water. The ball balanced there like a target in a shooting gallery. Harpo, delighted by this improbable phenomenon, produced a pistol and shot at the ball.

Groucho banged the reception desk bell in token of a bulls-eye. He tossed Harpo a fresh cigar.

The phone rang beside Groucho's elbow. He answered it.

"What's that, young lady?" he asked, "you're taking a shower and the water stopped running? Well, keep lathering yourself and I'll be up with a wet sponge."

But this was just another of those good ideas which was never put into practice. As Groucho began to slither over the counter, business detained him. A very distinguished grey-haired couple had come up to the desk. The man, probably an important diplomat, was about sixty, and his wife, expensively but quietly dressed, may have been two or three years younger.

"Have you a suite for me and my wife?" the gentleman inquired.

Groucho fixed the couple with a suspicious leer.

"Your wife, eh?" he said doubtfully.

"Yes, we'd like something very quiet."

"Oh—you would!" the manager snapped. "Have you any baggage?"

"Yes, it's on its way from the airfield."

"In all the years I've been in the hotel business," Groucho exclaimed, "this is the phoniest story I ever heard! I suppose your name is Smith?"

"No. Smythe—spelled with a 'y.'"

"That's the English version," Groucho sneered. "Mr. and Mrs. Smythe and no baggage! Let me see your marriage licence."

The diplomat recoiled. This was worse than talking to the Foreign Secretary.

"What! How dare you!" he stammered.

"Do I look like an idiot?" Groucho rasped. "Puts 'y' in Smith and expects me to let him in the hotel with a strange woman!"

"Strange! Strange woman?"

"She is to me," Groucho pointed out. "I've never seen her before."

"Sir," the other began with dignity, "you may not be aware of it, but I am President of the Casablanca Laundry."

This put an end to the rumour that he was in the Diplomatic Service. Groucho was interested. He reached promptly under the counter and pulled out a very dirty shirt.

"You are?" he said suavely. "Take this shirt and have it back Friday—and no starch."

The gentleman took the shirt mechanically, recollected himself, and slung it back at Groucho. Groucho addressed him sternly.

"Mr. Smythe, this is a family hotel, and I suggest you take your business elsewhere."

"Sir—this lady is my wife. You should be ashamed."

"If that lady is your wife—you should be ashamed."

"You'll hear from me, sir!" the gentleman roared.

"Do that," Groucho begged. "Even if it's only a postcard."

"Sir, my solicitors will be here in the morning."

"Well, they won't get a room either—unless they have a marriage licence."

Groucho had determined to raise the moral tone of the Casablanca Hotel.

After the Smythes had retired the reception desk phone rang again. Groucho lifted the receiver.

"What's that, sir?" he said. "You've been here six hours and your trunks haven't arrived?" His brain worked swiftly to meet this emergency. "Well, put your trousers on and nobody will notice."

He hung up and started away, but again the phone rang.

"This is the reception desk. Oh!" His tone of voice was suddenly guarded. "Miss Bea Reiner."

Though the phone was the old-fashioned sort and not fitted with a television device, he could see Bea stretched out on her chaise-longue in a seductive negligée. She managed to get these things into her voice.

"Mr. Kornblow," she purred, "are you very busy this afternoon?"

"Miss Reiner," he answered briskly, "after what you did to me the other night we have nothing in common." This was too severe; he softened slightly. "Maybe I shouldn't say *nothing*—but we have very little in common. I want you to know that I'm not talking to you. . . ."

She made a little distressed sound into the phone.

"All right," he continued, "I'll come up—but don't expect me to do any talking."

He hung up and slicked back his hair. He took a pride in his appearance. Then he rushed wildly from the desk towards the lift.

Bea, also hanging up, smiled happily to herself. She turned to Count Pfefferman at her elbow.

"He's on his way up."

"Good." The Count prepared to make himself scarce. "I'll break in at the proper time." A curious use of the word "proper."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE lift, towards which Groucho was making his passionate dash, was operated by Harpo—a curious use of the word operated. Before Groucho got there a very pretty girl had approached the lift door, and Harpo ingeniously raised the lift two or three feet so that she would have to expose her leg in order to enter.

Being a new arrival at the Casablanca Hotel, she fell for this, climbed aboard and asked for the ninth floor.

Groucho, a moment too late, watched the lift indicator creep from "Ground" to "1." At "2" it stopped abruptly. He heard lift-doors opening with a crash. He heard a panicky scream and a loud slap. He had the kind of mind which could imagine what was happening. So has the reader—so don't pretend.

A second later the girl stalked down the stairs again in a huff. She had decided to walk. The lift itself reappeared. Harpo leapt out and made for the girl. But Groucho had things on his own mind. He arrested Harpo sternly and got into the lift himself.

"Six," he said, "and make it snappy."

Harpo scowled his disappointment. He was a slave to this hotel. He followed Groucho into the lift, rolled up his sleeves and spat on his hands.

"You don't have to lift it," Groucho said. "Just work the lever and it'll go up by itself."

This was true—to a certain extent. It was true at least as far as the fifth floor. But half-way between the fifth floor and the sixth floor where Bea lived the lift gave out.

"What's the matter?" Groucho demanded in alarm. "Is it stuck?" Harpo nodded. "Between the fifth and sixth floors—this could only happen to me."

Harpo yanked at the lever furiously. It broke off in his hand. He handed it to Groucho. Groucho was discouraged.

"This is the end of the stick I always get," he grumbled. "You climb up through the roof of the car, pull yourself out at the sixth floor and get help."

Harpo shook his head in terror at the suggestion.

"Well, at least get somebody to keep us company."

Harpo nodded willingly. He mounted the operator's stool, slid open the ceiling panel and wriggled himself perilously upward. On top of the lift Harpo found the ledge of the sixth floor just out of his reach. Suicidally he made a jump for it. His fingers closed over the ledge and he hung there dangling. One of his feet, kicking violently, struck against the brickwork in the lift shaft.

As he did this a curious thing occurred. A portion of the brickwork, perhaps three feet square, slid smoothly and silently back, revealing a dark aperture behind. Evidently Harpo's toe

had struck against a hidden spring, releasing a hidden door half-way between the fifth and sixth floors of the hotel.

Harpo dropped back on to the top of the lift again, peering in curiously. He had already forgotten Groucho and the abandoned lift.

He wriggled into the vault and crept forward on hands and knees through a narrow passage. The passage opened out suddenly on a dimly lighted vault. Harpo stood up, staring around him with awe-struck eyes. He had entered an enormous treasure chamber. The walls on either side were banked with aged canvases which an expert would have recognised immediately as being some of the most famous paintings from the venerable art galleries of Europe.

Steel strong-boxes, some of them open, were filled with jewellery, diamond tiaras, ropes of pearls, huge old-fashioned rings, ablaze with emeralds, rubies, sapphires. Stacked in neat rows, great ingots of gold stood, and chests of clean-minted coins, gold and silver, of all ages and nations. There were boxes full of paper currency as well—great piles of crisp Bank of England notes, hundred-dollar bills, French, Italian and Russian banknotes.

The value of the assembled loot was incalculable. Harpo had stumbled on the vast treasure which had already cost the lives of three hotel managers, and for which Count Pfefferman would have given his eye teeth.

Harpo was delighted, less perhaps with the cash value of it all than by the prettiness of the display. He ran from one object to another, laughing happily, spilling great handfuls of gold coins all over the place, arraying himself in priceless crown jewels, swinging sceptres which had belonged to ancient kings as though they were knick-knacks acquired at a village fair.

For a while he had the time of his life, sporting around this fabulous fairyland. Tiring of jewels and banknotes, he examined the paintings. A scowling Rembrandt gave him a nasty turn. An El Greco sent him reeling back in shocked amazement. A fiercely realistic Van Dyke with a beard haunted him. Then he found a Botticelli—a charming, half nude maiden with golden tresses, which somewhat restored his interest in Old Masters.

Finally his eyes lit upon a beautiful gold harp, encrusted with semi-precious stones. A rhapsodical expression of blissful idiocy spread over his face.

He touched the harp with surprising gentleness, caressing the strings lovingly. Oddly enough the thing was in tune. He made himself comfortable. A ferocious head by Velasquez stared at him with disapproval. Nervously he pushed the canvas away, covering it finally with the more congenial maiden by Botticelli.

As his fingers delicately plucked the strings of the harp a fixed expression of childish serenity came over him. The dim vault melted away in a sea of heavenly harmony. He played obliviously, touching the dross of man's hoarded riches around him with a purer gold. . . .

That'll be about enough of that.

Groucho was meanwhile spending a very merry afternoon all

by himself, suspended between the fifth and sixth floors of the Hotel Casablanca. After completely demolishing all movables in the lift and scattering nuts and bolts all over the place, he had finally gone to sleep.

He was awakened by a shrill whistle from overhead. He stared up at the ceiling. Harpo's head hung downwards.

"Well, it's about time," Groucho glanced at his watch. "You went out of the window five hours ago—and so did my love-life."

Harpo signalled him wildly to come up.

"I don't want to go up now," Groucho shook his head. "Just take me down—and take me down in a hurry."

Harpo shrugged and reached for the fire axe. He knew how to obey an order. There was one simple way of getting the lift down in a hurry.

Harpo slashed with the axe at the cables which supported the lift. He slashed furiously.

In the lobby below an idle guest or two watched the pointer of the lift indicator, which for five hours had indicated that the lift was half-way between the fifth and sixth floors. The tedium of the idle guest was suddenly relieved by the fascinating spectacle of this lift indicator spinning sharply. It spun rapidly from five-four-three-two-one-Ground. Then it bounced up again to three-and-a-half. Then back to Ground. Then up to two-and-a-half.

Ultimately it settled itself at "Ground." The doors opened. Groucho and Harpo emerged. They were still bouncing slightly as they staggered across the lobby.

* * * * *

Outside, Chico was filling up one of his camels. A water hose led from the camel's mouth to a pump, which was fixed with an indicator. The indicator registered ten gallons when Harpo appeared on the scene.

Harpo took the rope by which the camel was tethered and fixed one end to a heavy brick of gold bullion he had brought from the treasure vault. He felt that he had at last discovered a practical use for a gold brick.

"Where'd you get that, Rusty?"

Harpo pointed upwards and raised five-and-a-half fingers. But before Chico could inquire further Count Pfefferman passed them. The Count stopped and stifled a start of amazement as he recognised the gold ingot.

"That's a fine camel," the Count said conversationally.

"He gets me where I wanta go," Chico growled.

"Would you sell him?"

"Well, I don't know. They haven't been making any for the last five years."

"I'll give you two thousand francs—for the rope, the weight and all."

"He's yours—and don't forget you gotta change the water every eight days."

The Count counted out the money. "I'll come back for the camel to-morrow," he said. "But I'll take the weight now."

He put the gold brick in his suitcase and continued towards the kerb, where a taxi was waiting for him. The taxi pulled off. Harpo, standing on the kerb, waved amiably. But the Count had no idea of departing. He merely wished to give the impression that he was leaving Casablanca.

He ordered the taxi to stop around the corner. He got out. There was Harpo again, still waving him bon voyage. The Count leapt angrily into the taxi again. This time he did a small tour of Casablanca before it again stopped.

The Count got out. You've guessed it. On the kerb stood Harpo, waving happily.

* * * * *

Bea had had a big night at the Supper Club. She was weighted down with flowers from enthusiastic admirers as she slunk through the lobby on Groucho's manly arm. They made for the lift.

"I sang well to-night, eh?" Bea murmured to her escort.

"It was wonderful," Groucho breathed ecstatically.

"Ah—you heard me?"

"No, I did not—and it was wonderful."

Bea paused. "I'm sorry the Count had to go out of town," she drawled, putting on her lonely expression. "We used to go to my room and split a bottle of champagne after I sang."

"Of course, I could pinch-hit for the Count," Groucho suggested gallantly. "At least, I could pinch for him."

But the course of Groucho's love-life was fated to be rocky. From behind a marble pillar Chico materialised. He grabbed Groucho's arm.

"Boss, am I your bodyguard?" he asked.

"We have an agreement," Groucho admitted, "and I can't wait till it expires."

"But, boss, I don't want you to expire first. You are playing with dynamite."

"I know what I'm doing," Groucho said. "And I think she does too."

"But I'm supposed to keep you alive."

"If I go. . . ." Courage rang in Groucho's voice as he looked Bea up and down, "that's the way I want to go."

"Shall we say in half an hour?" Bea smiled softly.

"In half an hour—and this time I'll walk up."

◇

CHAPTER NINE

WHEN Bea Reiner gave her mind to a seduction scene she made a job of it. There was good stuff in Bea—and she knew how to display it. Her evening dress was everything an evening dress ought to be—and not an inch extra.

She got the atmosphere just right before Groucho arrived. She put a soft Strauss waltz on the portable gramophone and sprayed the room liberally with an atomiser filled with costly but appro-

priate scent, the sort of scent girls are not supposed to use until they are of age. Then she reclined luxuriously on that well-worn chaise-longue of hers.

There was a gay knock on the door.

"Come in," she called, "the door is unlocked."

Groucho entered. He also knew—or thought he knew—how things ought to be arranged. He had therefore come prepared. He was carrying a champagne bucket, a bottle and a big bunch of roses. Thus laden, he crossed to Bea, flung himself on the foot of the chaise-longue, put the roses on her lap and the champagne bucket on the floor. He removed two champagne glasses from his pocket.

"Ah, these roses!" Bea breathed, "I'll keep them for ever."

"That's what you think—I only rented them for an hour."

"Oh, Mr. Kornblow!"

"Call me Montgomery. . . ."

"Is that your name?"

"No. . . . I'm just breaking it in for a friend." He indicated the Pekinese with disgust. "How about getting rid of that mutt?"

"Oh, Frou-Frou's a watch-dog," Bea smiled flirtatiously.

"Well, let him watch somebody else."

"Frou-Frou won't bother us—he has good manners."

"Well, if he has such good manners he'd get off your lap and give me a seat. I'm considerably older than he is. Besides, he can stand up better than I can. He's got twice as many legs."

He removed the Pekinese firmly and got himself into a more strategic position on the chaise-longue. Love's tenderness softened his eyes. There was a bang on the door.

"I was afraid of that," he said philosophically. "Who is it?"

"Hey, boss," the old familiar voice of Chico called, "you gotta woman in there?"

"She lives here," Groucho explained.

"Yeah, but you don't. She's gotta get you out. I'm your bodyguard."

"I'm too old to have a bodyguard."

"Then you're too old to be in there," Chico shouted.

Groucho thought fast. He turned to Bea.

"We'll go down to my room," he whispered. "The back way. Meet me in five minutes."

"But I can't leave Frou-Frou." Women always get ideas like this. "You wouldn't want me to leave my little poochie-goochie?"

"I'll meet you half-way. Bring the poochie and leave the goochie here." He gathered up the champagne, the ice-bucket, the glasses and flowers. Bea pointed to the gramophone.

"What about Strauss?" she cooed.

"Let Strauss get his own girl." But Groucho took the gramophone nevertheless. "I wanted to get loaded to-night," he said as he staggered out the door, "but not this way."

A few minutes later Groucho was installed in his own suite. He had arranged the flowers tastefully around the divan, wound the gramophone, put the Pekinese safely in a corner, and was spraying clouds of perfume around the place with a flit-gun.

It was as well that he was thus innocently occupied. For at this moment Count Pfefferman was bursting dramatically into Bea's room, bent on his dastardly scheme. A revolver was grasped in the Count's murderous hand. He kicked the door open with his foot.

"You swine," he began—as usual—"this will teach you. . . ." The rest of the speech he had prepared was wasted. Bea's room was empty. The lovebirds had flown. But on the chaise-longue the Count found a note which Bea had hastily scribbled. The note read: "Am in Kornblow's room—be there in fifteen minutes. Bea."

A look of diabolical cunning lit the Count's cruel features as he burnt the note with his cigarette-lighter.

Meanwhile Groucho had completed preliminary operations. The Strauss waltz was playing invitingly. Groucho himself was stretched luxuriously on the divan. The Pekinese sat nervously on his lap. There was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Groucho cooed languorously, "the door is unlocked."

Bea entered. "It's not very discreet of me to come to your room," she murmured, as though this sort of thing were new to her. "Do you think it's wise?"

"It's the smartest thing you ever did."

She came across to him. He raised an amorous paw.

"You seem very sure of yourself," she whispered tremulously.

"Why not? I've got to be sure of one of us. After all," he pointed out, "I'm a man—and you're a woman. And I can't think of a better arrangement."

"You men are all alike!"

"Yeah! And don't let anybody tell you any different. . . . Now where did we leave off in your room?" He threw open his arms. "Oh yes—let's live for the moment."

There was a bang at the door.

"Well, that takes care of the moment," he nodded.

Chico's voice yelled in from the corridor. "Hey, boss. You gotta woman in there?"

"It's my sister," Groucho yelled back.

"Well, I'm her brother—get her out!"

"I'll never leave her," Groucho averred passionately. "I'm mad about her. I'm crazy about her. I've completely lost my head."

"Well, put your hat on your neck and get out!"

Bea was getting a little hysterical. "These interruptions are driving me mad!" she complained.

"They're not doing me any good, either," her lover admitted.

"I'll go back to my room."

"All right—I'll meet you there in five minutes."

Patiently Groucho began preparations for the now familiar trek. While Bea hastily scribbled a note for Count Pfefferman he gathered up the champagne, the ice bucket, the glasses, the gramophone and the Pekinese, staggering under the load.

"If we're going steady," he said, "I'll have to get a small truck."

"Hurry," she advised.

"Wait a minute—I want to take an inventory."

Count Pfefferman burst into Groucho's suite about a minute afterwards. He was getting the outraged fiancé act down to a set performance. But he never seemed to find an audience.

"You swine!" he snarled, "I'll teach you to. . . ." He stopped short. The room was empty. Unluckily he did not burst a blood-vessel, but he tried. Then he found Bea's note: "Back in my room—fifteen minutes. Bea," he read.

Groucho was sweating slightly as he again reached the sixth floor. Carting all this junk around was beginning to tell on him. But he reached Bea's door. He tried it. It was locked. He knocked. The voice that answered him was not the sweet fluting of his beloved. It was Chico's!

"Who's that?" Chico demanded from Bea's room.

"Open up," Groucho whispered urgently. "Open up!"

"Hey, boss," Chico called back, "you gotta woman out there?"

"No."

The door opened and Chico's head appeared.

"Well, I gotta woman in here," Chico explained. "Go away!"

Groucho sighed. He knew when he was beaten—and, in a way, he rather liked it. He dumped champagne, gramophone, Pekinese and trimmings into Chico's arms.

"Here," he said sportingly, "you'll need these."

CHAPTER TEN

COMING out of the lift into the lobby, Groucho nearly collided with Count Pfefferman. The Count regarded him malignantly, but Groucho was all affability.

"Ah, Count Pfefferman," he said. "Back unexpectedly, eh?"

"I could not make connections," the Count grunted, unconvincedly.

"It's very hard to make connections in Casablanca," Groucho sympathised. "I missed several myself to-night."

The Count brushed rudely past. He made towards the Casino, which was actually a part of the Casablanca Hotel, though perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the Casablanca Hotel was part of the Casino. The Hotel paid its way—that is, it had done before Groucho's management—but the Casino paid the dividends.

As always, it was crowded. Baccarat and chemin-de-fer tables occupied the corners of the magnificent salon; but it was the large roulette tables in the centre which attracted the fashionably-dressed crowds.

The Count bought a pile of chips and took his usual seat. For a while he gambled morosely, neither winning nor losing. Shortly afterwards the smooth routine of the gaming room was disturbed. Harpo had somehow got loose in it. He had obtained a chip from somewhere and had decided to invest it.

With unerring instinct he squeezed between the Casino guests and elbowed out a position for himself immediately beside the Count. The Count had just placed a pile of chips on Number Five. Harpo leaned across, knocking the cigarette out of the Count's mouth, and placed his own single chip also on Number 5.

The Count, irked, immediately removed his own pile of chips to another number. The Count was particular about the company his chips kept.

"*Faites vos jeux, Mesdames, Messieurs,*" the croupier called. "*La partie commence—Faites vos jeux.*" And he spun the wheel. The little ball bounced merrily. "*Rien ne va plus.*"

At that moment the croupier saw Harpo. He nudged his assistant croupier and indicated the trouble. The assistant croupier rolled up his sleeves and started off in pursuit. He had been slinging Harpo out of the Casino daily for months.

The interest of the gamblers was divided between the chase of Harpo round and round the roulette table and the progress of the little ball round and round the roulette wheel. As they had no money on the former, the latter interest predominated.

The ball rolled, jumped and settled down on Number 5. The croupier raked in the chips and stacked thirty-six of them on Harpo's winning chip. Even at the present rate of exchange it was a nice win.

But Harpo knew nothing about it. He had about half a dozen of the Casino bouncers after him by this time, and his hands were full. His thirty-six chips remained on Number 5 while the wheel was spun again.

"*Faites vos jeux, Mesdames, Messieurs—Rien ne va plus! Les jeux sont faits.*" And the ball bounded round again.

This time the pile of chips on Number 5 excited a certain amount of interest. It was a lot of money to place on a thirty-six to one bet. Sane gamblers didn't do such things. Annette was particularly excited, for she knew the money belonged to her friend Harpo. The wheel slowed down. The ball settled. It settled in Number 5.

"*Numero cinq!*" the croupier shouted. He started slightly as he said it. It was going to cost the casino a tidy little sum.

But the place was on the level, and besides the croupier was paid a salary. He stacked thirty-six piles each of thirty-six chips each around Harpo's winnings. The board was getting a bit crowded.

"Whose chips," he inquired, "are they? Please take them in."

"They belong to Rusty," Annette said.

"Where's Monsieur Rusty?"

Annette pointed out Harpo, just holding his own against the bouncers. In the excitement Harpo broke loose and rushed to the table. The crowd that had gathered now included Brizzard and Governor-General Galoux. Harpo gaped at the fortress of chips confronting him.

"I'll have an assistant help you to carry them to the cashier," the croupier said.

Harpo shook his head. Jumping with excitement, he pointed again to Number 5.

"You wish to bet them *all* on Number 5?" the croupier exclaimed. Hard-bitten though he was, this shook him. The crowd stared at Harpo in sudden awe.

At this moment Groucho arrived.

"Monsieur Kornblow," the croupier protested, "this gentleman has won twice on Number 5, and he wishes to bet it all again."

Groucho was unimpressed. "Well, that's his hard luck," he said.

"But, Monsieur, it is a house rule. It is far over the limit. If he wins he will break the bank."

"Who cares about the bank?" Groucho shrugged. "I'm running a hotel."

Galoux could restrain himself no longer. "You idiot!" he growled softly to Groucho, "the bank is the hotel."

"Keep your medals on, General," Groucho soothed him down, "do you know what the odds are against a number repeating three times?"

"Never mind the odds!" Galoux exploded. "I've seen it happen. And if it does—it will break the bank!"

"Not if I roll the wheel," Groucho reassured him confidently.

"I've been a croupier at Monte Carlo, Deauville and Ostend—and nobody ever left *my* table a winner!" And with a knowing gesture he spun the roulette wheel.

"Stop that wheel," Galoux stormed.

"Too late, M'sieur," the croupier shrugged. "The play has started."

Groucho leaned against the table nonchalantly. He glanced from Harpo to Harpo's formidable pile of chips contemptuously. The ball bounced, wavered, dropped into Number 22, then bounced out again.

"Three times in a row!" Groucho sneered. "He's a sucker."

A cry went up from the hushed onlookers. The ball had settled for the third time in Number 5.

Groucho glanced at it and amended his statement. "The richest sucker in Casablanca," he said.

Pandemonium broke loose. Two or three women fainted. People laughed, hugged each other and shook hands as though they personally had done something clever. The guests hadn't had so much fun since the last manager was bumped off.

Harpo leapt on the table and danced wildly among the chips scattering them all over the place. He waved his arms and whistled for silence. He pulled out imaginary champagne corks and vaulted over the crowd's head towards the bar.

"Come on, everybody," Chico interpreted. "The drinks are on him!"

In the space of a few seconds the salon was practically empty. It's disgraceful how people will run after free drinks.

But Galoux and Brizzard stayed behind. They lacked the festive spirit.

"This is horrible," Galoux groaned. "Horrible! How can I explain it to the Government? I may be recalled." Worse, it had struck Galoux that he might have to make good the fortune

that Harpo had won out of his own pocket.

He was still mopping his brow when he noticed that Count Pfefferman had approached. The Count's expression was sympathetic.

"It is very obvious, Monsieur Galoux," the Count began smoothly, "that this was a conspiracy. Your manager and those two hoodlums are always together—they have been waiting for this coup. I have found out that Kornblow was never the manager of the Desert View Hotel—he ran a small motel out in the desert. He's an impostor. You saw how he broke the rule—you saw how he spun the wheel himself."

Galoux had listened to all this with renewed hope. He jumped to his feet. "Yes, Count—you're right!" he said. "We've been tricked! He's an impostor! A crook!"

"Worse," the Count insinuated. "He *might* be one of the gang who's been murdering your managers!"

"Too true, Count," Galoux nodded. With the possibility of recovering those millions of francs he was willing to believe anything. "If it is not too late," he added gratefully, "I humbly offer you the managership."

The Count bowed—his stiff bow. "It is rather late," he admitted. "But I accept. And as my first duty as managing director I suggest, Monsieur Galoux, that you give orders for the arrest of this gang of thieves and the recovery of the money they have stolen."

Galoux was grateful for the suggestion. Though a little long-winded, this Pfefferman was going to make a first-rate manager.

"Arrest them for conspiracy with intention to defraud!" he ordered Brizzard. "To rob us—to cheat us!"

Brizzard smiled; it would be a pleasure.

And that gets us to where Groucho, Harpo and Chico landed up in the Casablanca gaol—and some readers will think not a moment too soon.

Some people feel ill at ease in gaol. The atmosphere seems unfriendly and unfamiliar. Not so with our three heroes. They were of a naturally buoyant temperament and were adaptable. Besides, the experience was by no means unfamiliar.

They slipped into the unformal routine of cell-life as though they were born to it. Actually they were.

Their cell was commodious if somewhat plainly furnished. There were no chaises-longues, but they found the beaten dirt floor quite comfortable. The place had been thoroughly cleaned only last year.

There was little company of the more amusing sort. But they had each other, and one solitary Arab who sat cross-legged in one corner of the cell meditating. He had not spoken for three months and he had not washed for forty-three years.

But he was alive, and evidently romance had touched his solitary existence. For over his mattress he had tacked up on the wall half a dozen photographs of veiled Moroccan women. He had caught the pin-up habit badly.

But since this lonely Arab really has absolutely nothing to do



"I only rented the roses for an hour."



"If we're going steady, I'll have to get a small truck."



A picture of dejection.

with the story he will probably not be referred to again. Groucho, Chico and Harpo were having a quiet game of gin-rummy on the floor. Chico was dealing.

"Hey, boss," he paused suddenly, "that reminds me, the trial week is up to-day. From now on you gotta pay me to be your bodyguard."

But Groucho was no fool. "Why should I pay you?" he asked, "when there are a dozen guys around here guarding me for nothing?"

Chico nodded and finished the deal. The point seemed to be well taken. He glanced at his hand.

"The name of the game," he stated.

Groucho glanced at him questioningly, having no more idea than the reader what Chico was talking about.

"Gin," Chico interpreted. And he laid down his cards face up. They were winning cards already without the trouble and tedium of drawing further from the pack.

Groucho looked at them with a pained expression of disillusion. He threw in his own hand a little petulantly.

"That's the same hand you won with a minute ago!" he protested.

"That'sa the only hand I have any luck with," Chico explained. "Don't you ever put them back in the deck?"

"What'sa use?" Chico shrugged. "You gotta take 'em out again."

Groucho nodded philosophically. He was always coming up against this cold logic of Chico's to which there was no reply.

Just across the corridor in the cell facing theirs Annette was seated on a bunk, writing a letter. Annette, too, had been arrested by Brizzard's gendarmes. That was the penalty she had to pay for having been friendly with Groucho, Harpo and Chico. Both she and Pierre were suspected of being accomplices in their life of crime.

She added a decorative touch to the sombre gaol, and she looked very pathetic. At the sound of footsteps approaching she sprang to her feet and clutched the iron bars. Her eyes shone with suspicious brightness as she recognised Pierre himself, closely guarded by a prison warder.

"Pierre!" she half sobbed.

"Darling!" Pierre jerked away from his guard, grasping her hand warmly in his. "Brizzard told me the whole rotten story."

This touching scene left the guard cold. "Come on, you!" He grabbed at Pierre's arm.

"Where are they taking you?" she asked.

"Galoux is sending me back to Paris on the five o'clock 'plane," Pierre explained bitterly, "to be tried by the military authorities."

By this time a second guard had joined the first, and together they dragged the reluctant Pierre from Annette.

"We'll get out of this somehow," he whispered to her.

"I know," she nodded. She forced a smile. "I love you," she added swiftly.

And she didn't cry until Pierre was out of sight.

From their own cell her three neighbours had watched this pathetic encounter with faces pressed against the bars. Their expressions were quite as grief-stricken as Annette's own. Groucho, as he saw Annette fling herself back on her bunk, sobbing, tried hard to think of something encouraging to say. For perhaps the first time in his life words failed him. Chico, too, was dumb, making it a record.

Even Harpo, who had pursed up his lips to make one of his famous encouraging whistling noises, turned away in silence. All three relapsed on to the edge of a wooden bench and cupped their chins in their hands, a picture of dejection.

Groucho was the first to speak.

"You know," he mused, "Pierre seems like too nice a guy to have worked for the Government."

"The whole thing is your fault," Chico accused the late manager of the Hotel Casablanca. "You let Rusty break the bank."

Groucho defended himself hotly. "Didn't I warn him he was a sucker to play Number 5 again?"

That was true; Chico admitted the justice of it. "Yeah—it's all Rusty's fault," he said.

Harpo sulked. His feelings were hurt. Nervously he began to decorate one of the sleeping Arab's pin-up girls with a flourishing moustache. Groucho observed this.

"I think he's changing the subject," he said.

"Hey, Rusty," Chico called, "stop that—those are his pin-up girls."

"It's a funny thing," Groucho reflected sadly, "I've met a lot of pin-up girls, but I've never been able to pin one down."

Harpo, baulked in his artistic pursuits, groped within the mysterious regions of his inner clothing and removed a rolled up canvas. It was a picture of a very pretty maiden, and he began to pin it up over his own mattress. The picture, incidentally, was by Rembrandt.

"Who's the dame?" Groucho asked, peering at the signature in one corner of the canvas. "Oh—one of the Rembrandt sisters."

Across the corridor Annette caught the word.

"What did you say about Rembrandt?" she called.

"She's Rusty's pin-up girl," Chico explained.

"Do you know her?" Groucho inquired.

By this time Annette had come to the bars of her cell.

"Of course!" she answered Groucho. "But it isn't a *her*! It's a painter. Everybody knows Rembrandt—he's an old Master!"

Groucho was impressed. "You don't say? Well, his daughter looks like a pretty nice kid."

"But if that's really a Rembrandt," Annette exclaimed, her eyes alight with excitement, "it may have come from the treasure!"

"The treasure!"

Chico turned to Harpo. "Hey, Rusty, you know where the treasure is?"

Harpo nodded delightedly.

"Why you never tell anybody this before?"

"Maybe nobody ever asked him," Groucho suggested.

"Rusty," Annette called breathlessly, "could you take us to the treasure?"

Harpo nodded.

"I don't see how," Groucho mused, "unless it's in this cell."

"We've got to get out of here!" Annette exclaimed.

Too true, as Galoux might have put it.

All thought hard, but you can't think yourself out of gaol. It's been tried. That is, Annette, Groucho and Chico thought. Harpo wasn't up to that kind of exercise. While the others thought, he wandered up and down the cell bars. His resemblance to one of the higher forms of anthropoid apes behind the bars of a zoo was striking.

It struck the prison guard who at that moment strolled along the corridor. The guard was fascinated. He watched Harpo fidget, grimace, scratch himself, yawn, gape, pick his teeth. He approached, curiously drawn by the spectacle. Not since he was a little boy and his nurse had taken him to the monkey house at the zoological gardens had he seen anything so interesting.

That little boy of so many years ago had been unable to resist approaching the bars too closely. The guard of to-day was, after all, that same little boy—only with whiskers. Psychologically he was unchanged. He came nearer. He stared at Harpo's face, wondering how the whole thing had possibly come about.

Meanwhile Harpo had found an odd cake of soap in his pocket. He was chewing this thoughtfully. The soap had a delicate flavour, piquant and unusual, though perhaps a sprinkle of salt and pepper would have improved it. But what pleased Harpo about it was the lovely froth it produced at his mouth as he chewed.

Groucho and the guard saw this froth simultaneously.

"We've got a mad dog in here," Groucho yelled.

The guard rushed up. He seized Harpo through the bars. Then Groucho, Chico and Harpo seized the guard. In a moment Groucho had the bunch of keys which were dangling at the guard's waist.

The rest was easy.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

COUNT PFEFFERMAN'S new position as manager of the Hotel Casablanca had given him an opportunity of exploring the premises with Teutonic thoroughness, and he hadn't neglected his opportunity. Before the night was out, which our three heroes had spent peacefully in gaol, he had discovered the hidden treasure vault somewhere between the fifth and sixth floors of the lift shaft.

To-day the Count was working fast. An aeroplane, capable of flying him to South America, already waited on a small private

airfield a few miles from Casablanca. There remained only to pack away the priceless loot, take it to the aeroplane and quietly disappear.

The Count, Kurt and Emile had gathered in the Count's suite to pack. Emile, who acted as the Count's chauffeur, was also an ex-Luftwaffe pilot.

The Count had just stowed away the Austrian Crown jewels in one of the three empty trunks in the middle of the room. It might be observed that Beatrice Reiner, the fourth member of the gang, was conspicuous by her absence. Actually Bea was just beyond the door, listening, but the others didn't know this.

"Have you told Bea yet?" Kurt asked suddenly.

The Count smiled—his cynical smile. "I don't have to tell her," he said smoothly. "She finds out when we leave her here." The Count wasn't really interested in women or he wouldn't have made such a preposterous suggestion as that of leaving the lovely Bea behind.

"But she will talk," Emile pointed out.

"Let her talk! But this time it won't help. We'll be in South America."

Now Bea heard all this through the keyhole with all the anger of a spurned woman. She went off the Count in that moment of cruel awakening. She was disillusioned. The Count wasn't really a nice person to know.

She crept grimly back to her own room and lifted the telephone receiver. "Operator," she said, "get me the Prefect of Police, quickly! I must speak to Captain Brizzard."

Groucho, Harpo and Chico had fled wildly all over the gaol from which they had just, in theory, escaped. Annette, whom they had rescued, was out of breath with all the rushing around. Other prisoners, disturbed from their siestas, were under the impression that there was a riot on. Prison guards dashed down corridors in growing perplexity.

Finally Groucho, followed by the others, ducked into a door which stood invitingly open. They looked around in bewilderment. It was Captain Brizzard's office.

"This is where we came in," Groucho remarked. But Brizzard wasn't there and it was quiet. They closed the door. Then the telephone rang.

"That must be Captain Brizzard."

"He should be in his office taking care of business," Groucho grumbled. "No wonder this place is half empty! It's a crime the way this gaol is run."

"You better answer it before somebody else comes in to do it."

Groucho sprawled comfortably into Brizzard's chair, crossed his feet on the desk and purred suavely into the phone.

"Allo."

It was Bea. Groucho straightened his necktie.

"This is Captain Brizzard," he drawled. "... Were you ever in Paris in the spring? Ah, Paris, in ze Spring. ..."

He glanced up for a moment. "Doesn't anybody ever go to

Paris in the winter?" he asked. "But, of course, M'zelle Reiner," he returned to the phone hastily. "For you—your eyes, your cheeks, your hair—my whole gaol is at your disposal. Don't you see—this is where you belong." He paused for a moment to listen to Bea. Then he exploded. "What! The Count! The Treasure! I'll be right over." And he slammed down the receiver. "Pfefferman's packing the Austrian Crown jewels in his trunk—and they're loading the rest of the treasure on trucks in the garage," he told the others.

All rushed out. They were suddenly men of action.

"You go to the airport and get Pierre," Groucho said to Annette. "We'll go to the hotel."

"Hadn't we better get the police?" Annette asked doubtfully.

"We just got away from the police."

Five minutes later Groucho, Harpo and Chico rushed through the lobby towards the lift. But on the lift they saw a sign.

"Guests are kindly requested to use the stairway while the lift is undergoing repairs—Thank you. Count Pfefferman—Managing Director."

Groucho read the notice contemptuously.

"That's no way to run a hotel," he said, making a dash for the stairs.

* * * * *

Only the sound of a running shower-bath could be heard in the Count's suite as the door cautiously opened. Bea looked round. The place was apparently empty. She crept in, crossed swiftly to a large open trunk, reached deep inside it and brought forth a handful of jewellery.

She froze suddenly at the sound of footsteps outside. Cornered, she climbed hastily into the big trunk and closed the lid after her.

At that moment Chico, Harpo and Groucho burst in.

"He's ready to go." Chico's eye took in the scene at a glance.

"He's packing."

"Let's start unpacking," Groucho said.

This seemed a logical suggestion, and they put it into instant action. They rushed across the room to the Count's half-packed steamer trunk and tore the clothes out of it, scattering them profusely over the floor.

But heavy footsteps approached from the adjoining bedroom. They thought fast. Harpo leapt into an empty chest with a convex top. Chico disappeared into the empty suit-compartment of an upright wardrobe trunk. Groucho, finding all trunks by this time occupied, dashed for the big clothes cupboard with its four sliding panel doors.

They had barely taken cover when the Count strode in from the bedroom, knotting the belt of his dressing gown. The Count was in a state of nervous tension, which he sought to allay by pouring himself out a stiff whisky from the decanter on the sideboard. He drained the glass and walked towards the clothes cupboard. He slid open the panel on the extreme right. It was empty. He opened a second and a third panel with the same result. But the

fourth panel revealed several still unpacked suits and an overcoat on a hanger.

This latter the Count removed from the cupboard, carrying it by the hanger across to the half-packed steamer trunk. The Count did not hear the patter of little feet, nor did he observe those same feet—they looked suspiciously like Groucho's—protruding from beneath the overcoat.

He hung up the overcoat in the steamer trunk, and started back to the cupboard for more. The overcoat started back after him. But happily for the Count's sanity he did not observe this strange phenomenon.

The Count grabbed an armful of gent's suitings and carried them towards the wardrobe trunk in which Chico was hiding. While he did this, Groucho, in the overcoat, again hung himself up in the cupboard.

The Count managed to hang up the suits in Chico's trunk without encountering Chico. But as he turned away, Chico propelled the entire lot stealthily back to the cupboard again. *En route* to the cupboard he passed Harpo's chest. The lid rose and Harpo's arm emerged, stacking a pile of hats on Chico's head. These, too, went back in the cupboard. This made the Count's score minus one pile of hats.

Meanwhile the Count poured himself out another modest whisky. The Count didn't know it yet, but he was going to need that drink. It was at his lips when Chico slammed a panel of the cupboard shut. Fortunately, Chico was already inside, for the Count whirled round, pulling out a revolver from his dressing-gown pocket.

The room was apparently quite empty. The Count shook himself slightly. He had been sleeping badly of late. Then, for the first time, he noticed the shirts and underclothes he had already packed strewn all over the place. He poured out a third drink, gulped it down and threw the clothes back angrily into the trunk.

Then, seizing up a handful of pearl necklaces, he opened the lid of the chest into which Harpo had dived. The Count was a powerful man, otherwise he might have noticed the amazing weight of this large convex lid. For wedged into the lid was Harpo. The lid might have been made for him—he just fitted it.

But the Count saw only the pleasant heap of jewels at the bottom of the chest. He dropped the pearl necklaces in and returned for another drink.

He was measuring this out with a steady hand when he noticed the two trunks into which he had packed one overcoat and several suits respectively. Both trunks were now empty. The Count's eyes popped. He gulped down the whisky. Staggering slightly, he supported himself against the edge of Harpo's open chest. Harpo wriggled uncomfortably. The lid descended. It came down neatly over the Count's outstretched fingers.

The Count let out a yell. He dashed for the whisky decanter, and this time he gave himself a decent one. The drink steadied his nerves. With the fulfilment of all his ambitions so nearly at hand he was getting a little jittery.

While he applied himself earnestly to the whisky Harpo leapt from his chest like a jack-in-the-box, and seeing that the Count's back was turned, tiptoed to the steamer trunk which the Count for the second time had packed with shirts and underwear. Harpo grabbed these and hared towards the big hanging cupboard, inside which he joined Groucho and Chico.

At the same time Bea cautiously raised the lid of the canvas trunk and peeked out. Seeing the Count's broad back, she ducked back again. The sound of the lid closing after her caused the Count to whirl round. The room was again deathly still—and apparently empty. Mice? The thought of making a furious protest to the management crossed his mind. But he remembered that he was now the management.

Then he ceased to think. He had just noticed the steamer trunk, into which but a moment ago he had crammed shirts and underclothes. The trunk was empty. He rubbed his eyes and opened them again. It was still empty. Paling slightly, he re-examined the other two trunks, where he would have bet a large sum of money that he had hung the overcoat and the suits. Both were still empty.

He rushed distractedly from one trunk to another, aware that something inside him was slipping. Reason told him that this rushing from trunk to trunk was futile—but he couldn't help it. He recalled the address of a first-rate psychologist he had heard of in Vienna. Then he got a grip on himself and was practical.

He marched with the determination of a man who *knows* he is practically sane towards the great hanging clothes cupboard. He jerked open a sliding panel. Empty space confronted him.

He opened a second panel; nothing. Breathing heavily, he tried a third; absolute vacancy. By the time he reached the fourth and last panel his heart was pounding erratically. He offered up a little prayer, not so much for his missing clothes as for visual proof that he was not stark raving mad.

He slid the fourth panel aside abruptly. He stared. A stifled cry died away in his dry throat. It was empty.

While the Count was shattering his nerves outside the cupboard, the inside had been a hive of activity. Three men and about three dozen suits, overcoats, hats, shirts, etc., etc., had been shifting around at a furious pace to give the Count the illusion of emptiness. It had been exhausting work.

The Count reclosed the fourth panel with a trembling hand. His features were drawn and haggard. He returned again to the trunks, hoping against hope. But they were empty all right. He turned to the whisky decanter, but this time he did not seek its solace. He grasped the neck of the decanter furiously and smashed it into the fireplace. From that moment onward he determined to go on the waggon.

While he was thus virtuously occupied Harpo emerged from the cupboard and snooped across the room, dodging into a closet a split second before the Count again turned and began to pay attention to things. But what the Count saw did him little good. Harpo had left one panel of the cupboard ajar—and there, peek-

ing reproachfully at him, the Count clearly saw a dozen suits hanging neatly from hangers. He put out a hand to prevent himself from fainting away.

At that moment Kurt entered. The Count looked at him gratefully. Kurt at least was *real*. Kurt was pushing a hand-truck, which he had brought along for the trunks, which, strictly speaking, should have been ready for removal.

"The boxes are all in the trucks, Count," he announced.

"Good." The Count's voice was strained and unnatural. "Help me pack these things and let's get out of here. This place is getting on my nerves."

He had put the case mildly, and now, with a certain amount of relief, he mooched off into the adjoining bedroom, leaving the packing to Kurt.

Kurt made a beeline for the closet in which Harpo had last taken refuge. He reached innocently in and brought out a large dust-bag. This he carried by its hanger-hook towards the wardrobe trunk. The dust-bag was fitted with a zipper, and the zipper zipped down suddenly. Harpo's face popped out. It wore a worried look. The zipper zipped back again as Kurt deposited the bag in the wardrobe trunk.

The Count came in from the bedroom, knotting his necktie. He was feeling more his usual self.

"We must hurry," he grumbled. "I clean out my desk—you pack the stuff."

He opened his desk drawer while Kurt dropped on his knees in front of the drawers of the wardrobe trunk. The Count's back was to the trunk and he handed over a bunch of papers without looking round.

"Here," he muttered, "hurry."

Now the Count's hand, in reaching the papers to Kurt, passed immediately in front of the zipper of the dust-bag. The zipper opened a few inches and Harpo's hand came out. It grasped the bunch of papers and drew it back into the cavernous depths of the dust-bag.

The Count now handed back an expensive-looking gold fountain-pen. Harpo's hand received it and withdrew. The zipper closed firmly.

"Wait," the Count said suddenly, turning round to Kurt, "I must write a note. Give me back the pen."

Kurt glanced at his chief in bewilderment. "What pen?" he asked.

"The one I just gave you."

"You didn't give me a pen." It was against the best Prussian traditions to contradict his chief like this, but facts were facts.

"Are you mad?" the Count rasped.

"But, Count," the other paled slightly, scrabbling in the wardrobe drawer to prove his point.

"You dare to contradict me!" The Count turned angrily back to the bureau drawer again. "I tell you it's gone!"

While the Count's back was turned the zipper opened. Harpo's paw flapped out. It slapped Kurt sharply in the face and dis-

appeared. Kurt leapt to his feet and clicked his heels together smartly.

"My apologies, Excellency!" he said.

"All right, never mind," the Count growled impatiently. "Get some of this stuff on the trucks."

"Yes, Excellency."

Kurt snapped to attention and then got to work on a box or two which were ready to go, piling them on his hand-truck and wheeling them out of the room. The Count returned to the bedroom. For the briefest instant peace again returned to the room. Then things began to stir and come to life.

Harpo—or rather the dust-bag containing Harpo—moved out of the trunk. Chico, still clad in a stack of half a dozen hats, crawled out of the cupboard, and Groucho, beneath the peripatetic overcoat, staggered from another panel of the cupboard.

They shed their camouflage in the middle of the room.

"Hey, what's keeping Pierre?" Chico whispered. "We can't hold the Count up much longer."

"That's what you think," Groucho said. "Let's turn this trunk over."

They turned one of the wardrobe trunks, the drawers of which were neatly packed, upside-down. But before they had really got warmed up the Count's footsteps approached. The Count could never stay in one place.

They made a dive for it: Harpo under the dining table, Chico behind another trunk, and Groucho behind a divan near the open window.

When he entered this time the Count was fully clad and almost in his right mind. He was carrying a stack of evening shirts. These he put down on the dining table and opened the top drawer of the trunk which had just been turned upside-down. Not unnaturally, the contents of the drawer spilled all over the floor. It was simply the law of gravity. But the Count didn't see it this way. His faith in things was shaken to the core.

He opened a second drawer. The same law of gravity was demonstrated. He jerked open a third—stuff fluttered all over the place.

Emile arrived with another hand-truck to find his Chief fuming.

"What is holding us up?" Emile wanted to know. "The trucks are ready."

"This infernal packing!" the Count stormed. "Everything is going wrong."

The two got down to the job in earnest. They stacked the debris from the upside-down trunk, dust-bag, hats, overcoats and suits—all on the dining room table. As they struggled to get the trunk right side up again, Harpo slid the two halves of the dining table apart, and most of the debris cascaded down on top of him.

He passed clothes, shoes, hats, etc., etc., to Chico, who passed them on to Groucho—who threw them out of the open window. For a while they worked rhythmically, like a bucket brigade at a fire drill. Emile and the Count, occupied with the trunk, observed nothing.

Then the Count went to the big cupboard. Emile straightened out the drawers of the wardrobe trunk. Chico seized this unpropitious moment to break cover and grab a pile of shirts. Burying his face in them, he hurried across the room, colliding slap-up with the Count returning from the cupboard.

The Count received the pile of shirts in outstretched arms.

"Ah, thank you, Emile," he said.

Chico thrust the shirts in his face and ducked behind another trunk. Emile popped up at the sound of the commotion, but all he could see was the Count, who by this time had his hands full.

"What's the matter with you, fool!" the Count raged, under the impression that he was addressing Emile. "Can't you see I have my hands full of suits. Take back these shirts."

"But, Max . . ." Emile began, puzzled.

"Don't argue!" The Count cut him short. "Let's see if I left anything in the bedroom."

They disappeared yet again into the bedroom. The boys drew a moment's breath of relief. The strain was beginning to tell. They were whiling away their time in tossing the remainder of the clothes out of the window when the door in the hall opened. Kurt had come back.

All three scrambled for the same empty wardrobe trunk. Harpo and Chico made it, but Groucho didn't fit. No time remained for being choosy about trunks. Just as Kurt entered Groucho leapt into the canvas trunk.

Kurt, however, went into the bedroom to find the others, otherwise he might have heard that all was not well inside the canvas trunk. For Groucho found it already occupied. The lovely Bea Reiner lay snuggled along one side of it, staring at the intruder with mingled feelings—most of them disagreeable.

"Well, well," Groucho said, "it certainly is a small trunk."

Bea recognised him with a start. "You!" she gasped.

"Who were you expecting?" Groucho inquired suavely.

"What are you doing in here?"

Groucho avoided the question. "I have a new respect for the Count," he said admiringly. "He certainly knows how to pack a trunk."

"We've got to get out of here," Bea whispered.

Groucho, who was settling down, didn't quite see why; but his manners towards women were always urbane.

"All right," he agreed, "I'll meet you in a valise."

But this was not to be. The arrival of the Count, Emile and Kurt from the bedroom put a stop to further conversation—as though Groucho cared. He settled down philosophically in the trunk beside Bea.

Chico and Harpo, huddled in their half-open trunk, also heard the others coming in from the bedroom. They reached out and pulled the trunk shut.

The Count surveyed the closed wardrobe trunk with approval. "Ah, Emile, you have it all packed," he said. "Fine. Take it down at once, Kurt. Let's get out of here."

When the Count was in one of these moods people didn't argue with him. Kurt and Emile shrugged and loaded the heavy wardrobe trunk on to the hand truck. Kurt wheeled it through the door.

"Now this one." The Count indicated the canvas trunk containing Bea and Groucho.

And Emile rolled it out of the room.

* * * * *

Half an hour later three trucks, laden with the loot of half Europe, speeded along a bumpy road on the outskirts of Casablanca. In the first truck there were Rembrandts, Rubens and stacks of Old Masters; in the second, several hundred pounds weight of minted gold and silver; and in the third there were—among other treasure—two trunks containing Groucho and Bea, Chico and Harpo. A somewhat mixed haul. It looked as though the Count were going to land up in South America with more than he had bargained for.

The wardrobe trunk containing Harpo and Chico was having a rough trip. It bounced around in the back of the van dangerously, and every time it hit the floor Harpo's hooter could be heard bitterly to complain.

An especially hard bump suddenly snapped the lock. The trunk burst open. Harpo emerged rather like a newly-born chick coming out of its shell. He looked battered and dilapidated. In brief, he looked much as usual.

Chico struggled out after him. They clung perilously for support together in the violently bumping truck. Regaining their balance—physical, that is to say, not mental—they opened the canvas trunk, revealing Groucho and Bea. Whether or not Groucho and Bea had actually enjoyed that past half hour is doubtful, but they had certainly managed to get together.

Groucho glanced up at his two rescuers rather reproachfully.

"Don't you fellows know better than to open a trunk without knocking?" he asked.

He got to his feet. Always the gentleman, he stooped to lend Bea a hand. But the truck at that moment hit another boulder and the lid of the canvas trunk banged back into place with Bea still inside.

Simultaneously Groucho, Harpo and Chico were catapulted off the end of the truck into the dusty roadway. They sat in the dust, reflecting on the vicissitudes of life.

* * * * *

It will have been forgotten that Lieutenant Pierre Delbart was being sent on the five o'clock plane to Paris to be tried by the military authorities. Also that Annette had been sent by Groucho to fetch him back—precisely how had been left to Annette.

At a quarter to five Pierre was sitting between two gendarmes on a bench in the Airline Terminal, not very much looking forward to his trip to Paris. He glanced up to see Annette rushing towards him. She was flushed and breathless, though she

managed, as ever, to look extremely pretty.

"Pierre—the treasure!" she articulated. "They're getting away with it!"

Pierre was electrified. If they once managed to remove that loot from Morocco his story of the crash-landing would never be believed. He would be shot as a collaboratorist long before his innocence could be proved. He glanced swiftly from the gendarme on his right to the gendarme on his left, measuring them.

"You've got to let him go!" Annette was appealing to their better natures. But gendarmes do not have better natures.

"It is forbidden to talk to Lieutenant Delbart," one of them stated unhelpfully.

Pierre's eyes had narrowed. He flexed his muscles and gripped the underside of the bench on which he and his guards were sitting. Then abruptly he rose, jerking the bench up with him. The two gendarmes toppled backwards beautifully, like ninepins.

"Quick!" Pierre snapped. "Their car—it's outside."

Annette needed no urging. She was already half-way to the police car parked outside the Airline Terminus.

* * * * *

We left our three heroes sitting meditatively in the dust. They had now completed their meditation, picked themselves up and dusted off their clothes. The improvement in their appearance was unnoticeable.

They trudged wearily forward in the direction the Count's trucks had taken. Their hearts were still strong—though their feet weren't so good. A powerful motor-car going their direction roared past. Three thumbs went up optimistically. The powerful car sprinkled them liberally with dust.

Another car, travelling in the opposite direction, that is to say, towards Casablanca, approached. Harpo, reversing his stance, thrust out a thumb.

"Hey! They're going in the wrong direction," Groucho pointed out. Then, shrugging, he added: "He doesn't care where he goes, does he!"

This time they had better luck. The car slowed down, and, with a scream of brakes, stopped. It was the police car borrowed by Annette and Pierre.

"Hey—did you go past some trucks?" Chico shouted.

"Yes," Pierre nodded.

"That's the treasure!"

All three piled into the back seat while Pierre swung the car around. Ten minutes of extremely dangerous driving brought them on to the tail of the trucks, just after the Count and his gang had reached the tiny hidden airfield where his transport plane was waiting.

Already the plane was taxiing across the rough ground to get into a take-off position along the narrow strip of levelled ground. Emile was at the controls, with Kurt beside him as co-pilot. Count Pfefferman was acting as wireless operator.

Pierre drove the car on to the landing strip, slammed on the brakes and jumped out. "Get Brizzard!" he snapped, as Annette slid into the driver's seat. Then to the boys, who had scrambled out with him: "We've got to stop that plane!"

"You haven't got a P-38 on you, have you?" Groucho asked. No one had, so all four raced frantically towards the taxiing plane. They nearly reached the rear door.

"To think," Groucho panted, "that I left the City because I was sick of chasing buses!"

But the Count, from the window of the plane, had seen them. He nudged Emile, who smiled nastily and shoved the throttles forward. The engines roared and the hurricane backwash of the propellers caught Pierre and the boys square in the face, blowing them down the field head over heels among a mass of petrol drums, logs and other debris.

This spectacle amused the Count; he was not without his own peculiar sense of humour. "Hurry," he said, "let's take off."

"I've got to head her into the wind with this load," Emile explained.

This meant that the plane had to turn round and come back again. Pierre and the three boys had meanwhile gathered up the pieces and had jumped into a petrol truck on the edge of the field. A little more dangerous driving brought this truck alongside the accelerating plane.

At this moment the sleeping beauty in the canvas trunk came to life. The lid was raised cautiously and Bea appeared. A heavily jewelled royal sceptre was clutched firmly in her hand. But before she could use it she noticed the petrol truck racing along beside the plane. She crawled to the rear door of the plane and opened it.

To leap from a racing truck on to a racing plane was child's play to Harpo. He gave the impression that he did it daily. But as he clambered aboard the Count rushed back from the wireless controls. The struggle was brief—thanks entirely to Bea's royal sceptre, with which she caught the Count a neat conk over the head. Harpo tossed the inert body out to Chico and Groucho on the truck. He turned, only to find Kurt. The battle raged again.

"It's been a long time since you had to put up a fight like that to get a seat on a plane," Groucho remarked.

Kurt's fingers tightened cruelly around Harpo's neck. Before his swimming eyes Harpo saw the sign: "Emergency Escape Panel." He could read. He pulled the handle indicated, and Kurt toppled backwards out of the plane. He hit the dust.

By this time, Groucho and Chico had jumped for the plane. Harpo, after giving them a helping hand, was creeping towards Emile and the cockpit, Bea's sceptre clutched in his hand.

Harpo smiled beatifically as he sloshed the sceptre down on to Emile's head. Emile slumped without a murmur. Harpo beamed happily. He was unaware that the heavy plane was rushing onwards at sixty miles an hour with no one at the controls.

Pierre, from the driver's seat of the truck, yelled: "Cut the switches!"

"Cut the switches!" Groucho yelled to Chico.

"Cut the switches!" Chico yelled to Harpo.

Harpo, who hadn't a clue, slid himself hopefully into the pilot's seat, fiddling with the sea of mysterious instruments around him. He pulled and pushed things. Some of them must have worked, for the 'plane suddenly accelerated.

Now everybody took a hand. Harpo, Groucho and Chico each in turn pulled levers, toyed with promising-looking gadgets. The 'plane reacted violently. It was sensitive about its controls. It spun round, leapt forward, tilted drunkenly, gained speed.

"Whatta we gonna do?" Chico asked.

"We'll have to keep going till we run out of gas," Groucho explained, glancing at the gauge. "There's only two thousand gallons left."

At this moment the 'plane was overtaking a car.

"Here it is Thursday," Groucho complained, "and we have to run into a week-end driver."

Harpo honked his cane horn furiously, but it did no good. He grabbed yet another lever and yanked desperately. The 'plane swooped up like a bird and cleared the car by an inch. This was excellent in its way, but the fact remained that they were now airborne.

Bea was on her knees beside the unconscious Emile, shaking him violently. "Emile! Wake up!" she screamed. "Wake up!"

"He's the only one who can stop the 'plane." Chico saw her point.

Groucho dashed water from a thermos flask into Emile's face. Emile groaned and sat up.

"Emile, you've got to stop the 'plane or we'll all be killed," Bea said urgently.

Emile needed no urging. Groggy though he was, he recognised sudden death when he saw it. He clambered forward hurriedly and flung himself into the co-pilot's seat beside Harpo. His efficient hands reached for the throttles and the brakes.

Unhappily, they never got there. Harpo, resenting interference and proud of his piloting, merely glanced at him, grabbed up the sceptre and knocked him cold again.

Groucho closed his eyes as he saw Emile pass out. For a second Groucho nearly fainted. But he tossed the rest of the water in the thermos flask into his face and revived himself.

The 'plane was skimming along the top of telegraph poles, Harpo and Chico still struggling with the controls. Bea, always optimistic, was trying for the second time to revive Emile. But Groucho had settled down, his chin cupped fatalistically in his hands, staring moodily out of the window. He raised his eyebrows thoughtfully as he read the legend on a signboard which whizzed past.

"IS YOUR JOURNEY REALLY NECESSARY?" he read.

Now the old, white-walled city of Casablanca loomed ahead from the pilot's window.

"Hey—we're getting into town!" Chico shouted.

"How about a transfer?" Groucho asked. "I want to take a bus."

The 'plane swooped over the mosques and minarets of the bazaar. Groucho recognised the picturesque view. The view in fact was getting uncomfortably close. You could almost smell the drains. The 'plane swerved suddenly.

"Look out!" Groucho warned. "You're going against a red light!"

And he covered his eyes—not a moment too soon. There was a rending crash, a ripping, tearing racket of debris, then a sickening moment of absolute silence. . . .

With a curious homing instinct the huge transport 'plane had brought its passengers to earth exactly outside the city gaol. It had draped itself—or rather what remained of itself—just over the prison wall.

Bea, Groucho, Harpo and Chico crept from the shambles which had once been the cabin. All, amazingly, were alive—which ought to prove something. They crawled from the wreckage to find themselves practically in the same cell where they had spent the previous night.

"We must have had a round-trip ticket," Groucho commented.

At that instant the petrol truck from the airstrip rolled up. It contained Pierre, the Count and Kurt. Kurt and the Count had recovered themselves and leapt from the truck. They dashed towards Groucho, with Pierre at their heels.

At the same time Annette, in the police car, rushed up. With her she had Brizzard and half a dozen gendarmes.

It looks like the show-down.

"Come on in, Count," Groucho begged ingratiatingly as the nobleman rushed him. "We just fixed up your room."

In the ensuing struggle the Count once more lost that famous toupet. Brizzard, rushing up, stared at the bald result with eyes which were at long last opened wide.

"Heinrich Stubel!" he exclaimed, somewhat late in the day.

"I arrest you for the murder of the three managers of the Hotel Casablanca."

"Yes," Groucho agreed. He pointed out the truck which the Count had arrived in. "And for parking in front of a fire hydrant," he added sternly.

Brizzard, doing the big-hearted thing, turned to salute Lieutenant Pierre Delbart, whose honour the events of the past hour had cleared. "Lieutenant," he said, "accept my deepest apologies."

Pierre accepted them. Annette smiled with pleasure. Pierre took her in his arms in the accepted manner. She raised her warm lips eagerly. His lips found hers in a passionate embrace.

Bea had watched all this with the deepest interest. Little true romance had lightened the checkered existence of the lovely Bea Reiner. She sighed deeply.

A Night in Casablanca

"If a thing like that could only happen to me!" she breathed. Groucho, Harpo and Chico never heard a lady express a sentiment like that without rising to the occasion. They tore off their coats. They closed in upon her.

Bea fled. Down the romantic byways and through the colourful bazaars of old Casablanca they chased her. . . .



A drink for shattered nerves.



FACTS ABOUT THE FILM

Produced by David L. Loew and directed by Archie Mayo.
Original screenplay by Joseph Fields and Ronald Kibbee.

* * * * *

To produce *A Night in Casablanca* a million-dollar corporation was formed between David L. Loew and the Marx Brothers themselves. David L. Loew's recent picture, *The Southerner*, showed him to be a producer of independence and imagination. It was acclaimed by English critics as one of the most moving films ever made.

* * * * *

Lisette Verea believes that American women, though beautiful, are coddled and spoiled and terribly neglected. American men, according to her, work too hard and think too much of money and success. The result is they "neglect their home-work."

"In the whole of Roumania," she says, "only four or five women have beautiful fur coats. While in America nearly every woman has a fur coat."

Incidentally, Lisette herself has eleven.

* * * * *

It is a recognised fact in Hollywood that aspirants who win film contests are rarely heard of again. But Charles Drake and Lois Collier, who play the juveniles in *A Night in Casablanca*, have proved exceptions to this rule. In spite of being contest winners, they both appear to be on the road to success.

* * * * *

Groucho's name is supposed to be derived from the fact that as a youth he once played parts as a grouchy old man. The origin of Harpo's name is more evident. That of Chico is veiled in obscurity.

* * * * *

A Night in Casablanca is the Marx Brothers' twelfth picture. While it was being filmed the cast threw a birthday party in honour of Harpo. A huge birthday cake was presented to him, bearing twelve candles. "That gives you a rough idea of his mental development," Groucho commented.

* * * * *

Harpo and Chico both play music in the film, Harpo giving us the Second Hungarian Rhapsody on the harp, Chico the Beer Barrel Polka and Moonlight Cocktail on the piano.

GROUCHO MARX

GROUCHO is the one with the moustache.

In spite of this he is married and has two children, Marilyn and Arthur. His real name is Julius, and he is the youngest of the three Marx Brothers.

He wears smoked glasses when he works on the set in order to protect his eyes from the colours of Harpo's shirts.

He was once a boy soprano in a church, but this career ended abruptly when he punctured the organ bellows with the alto's hat-pin.

He posts his Christmas cards in mid-July and is altogether the most businesslike of the Marxes. He signs their collective cheques, dictates to the secretary between scenes and acts as the family executive. Off the screen he dresses smartly and resembles a leading man rather than a comedian.

Max Eastman once wrote of Groucho: "Without his make-up he is a handsome and sensitive-featured young man with an exquisite profile, a man who might well, in a serious drama, play the part of Heinrich Heine."

But Groucho is one of those rare comedians who has no desire to play either Hamlet or Heine.

He reads a great deal and has written a book, a film story and many magazine articles.

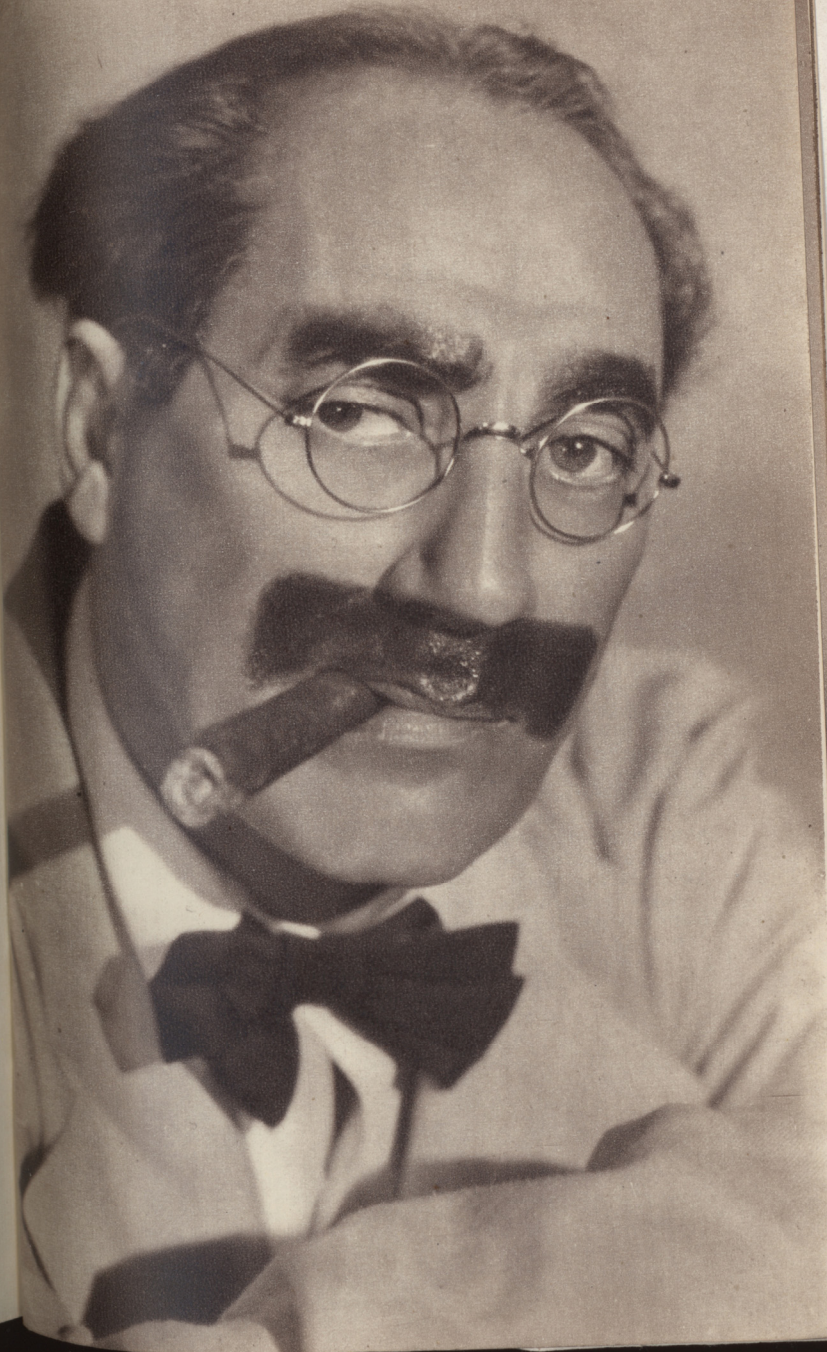
He takes his family to the pictures every Saturday night and spends most of his week-ends at home, alleging that the food there is much better.

His favourite sport consists in going downstairs to play his wife "for the ping-pong championship of the world."

He is an excellent tennis player and is a close friend of Fred Perry.

He likes to relax by playing on an ancient guitar, on which he strums out everything from "Home on the Range" to the Prelude for the third act of "Lohengrin."

One of his problems is finding comic screen names. Once he had to eliminate "Phineas X. Flitterwaggle" because he discovered a man who actually bore that name.



HARPO MARX

HARPO MARX was a flop in the silent films. It took the talkies to make him a screen star.

Contrary to popular impression, he is not a mute. He became a pantomimist because his mother hadn't time to prepare any lines for him when she shoved him out on to the stage to join his brothers. This experiment proved so successful that he has kept his mouth shut ever since, with one or two minor exceptions.

One of these was when a fire broke out in a Detroit theatre. Harpo, on this occasion, stepped out on to the stage to calm down the audience. He launched into a soothing address. But he couldn't think of anything to say, so he made the Confirmation speech he had learned at the age of thirteen.

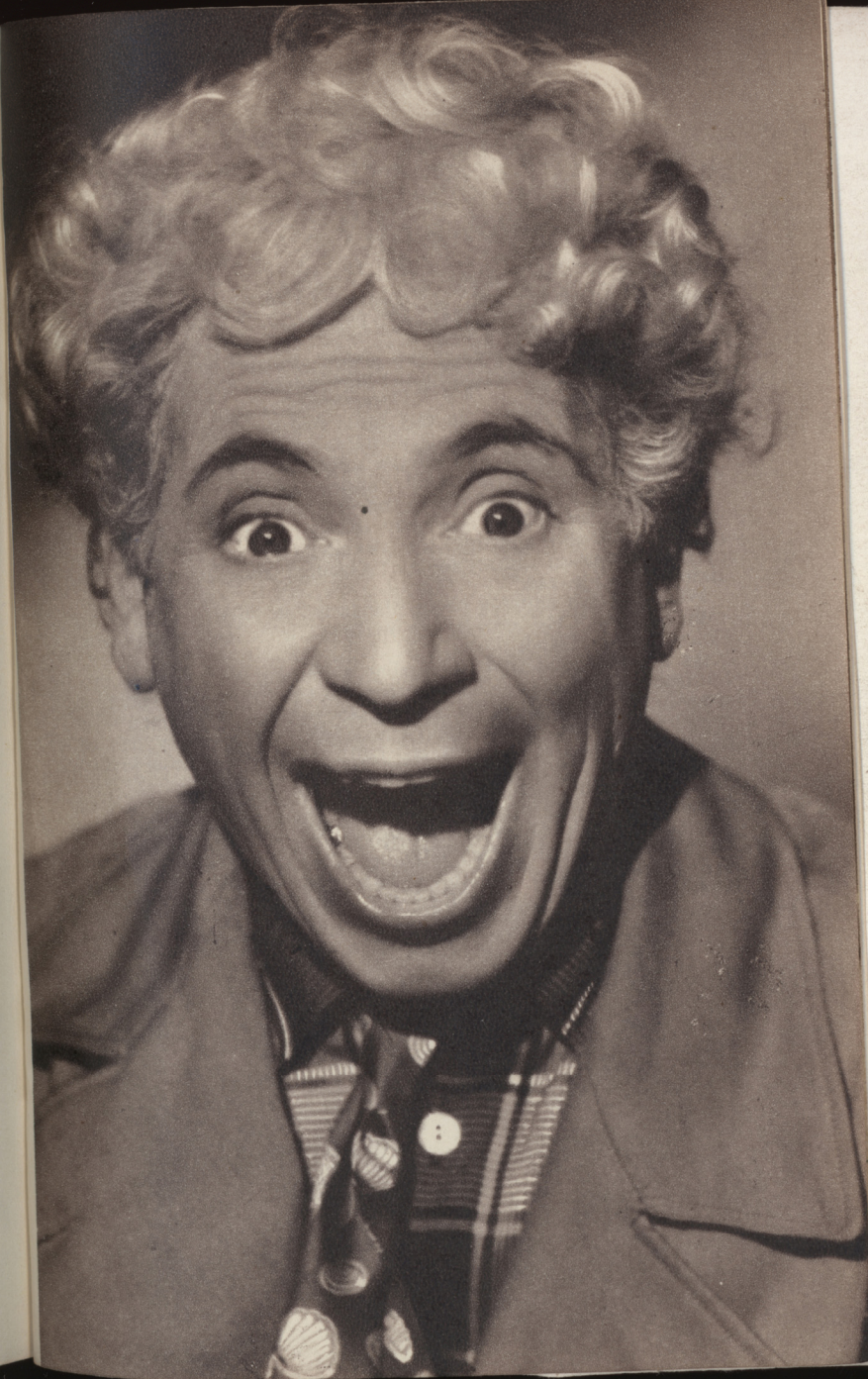
At another time he substituted for a political speaker in order to keep the audience from getting restless. Minus wig, he was unrecognised and spoke for twenty minutes in garbled talk so that no one understood him. He was wildly applauded at the finish and was thanked gratefully by the scheduled speaker, who had arrived in the middle of it.

He is a first-rate harpist and has been invited to play with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Entirely self-taught, he cannot read music. For years he didn't know that he was bracing his harp on the wrong shoulder, until he saw a painting in an art shop window of an angel playing a harp. No one else can play Harpo's harps, because of the odd way he tunes them.

He recently got weighed on a machine that dispenses fortunes along with the tabulated weights. His card read: "You have a career ahead of you, but be careful you don't lose your job. You talk too much."

Actually he claims that Groucho and Chico have kept him from talking all these years so that he won't reveal that he is the only sane member of the family.

"I can talk," he says, "but I hate to interrupt Groucho."



CHICO MARX

CHICO is the one that plays the piano. Rachmaninoff is said to be one of his greatest admirers, though admittedly their technique is different.

He also plays bridge; in fact he is one of the ranking bridge players of America, and once wrote a book on the subject. His real name is Leonard, and off the screen he lives up to it, being a quiet type, fond of his family, animals, golf and domesticity.

But he is not fond of work, and on the set he never loses the opportunity for a nap. Groucho thinks he ought to be cut up into capsules as a substitute for sleeping tablets. "Chico had a narrow escape on the set to-day," Groucho once remarked, "he almost stayed awake."

When he isn't napping he can be found in off moments toying with a piano. He and Harpo make an excellent piano team. Chico taught Harpo.

As a boy Chico took lessons at a shilling each, his mother frequently supplying the shilling from the rent money. But Chico seemed to get worse after each lesson. When his course was completed the instructor didn't say a word. He simply handed Chico his hat—and returned his fee! This at any rate helped with the rent.

He has been married for twenty years and has a daughter nineteen years old, who is studying for the stage in New York. She, according to Chico, is his best audience. She giggles.

His wife was still at school when Chico proposed. "You'll learn more from me," he pointed out, "than you will from those books."

She did.





LISETTE VEREA

LISETTE VEREA, who plays the part of Bea Reiner in *A Night in Casablanca*, is five feet four-and-a-half inches tall, weighs eight stone four, has blue eyes and blonde hair. But that is only part of the story.

She has three brothers at home in Budapest, but unfortunately only one sister.

Born in Bucharest, the daughter of a well-known artist, Henry Vereá, she shared his enthusiasm for the country and gipsy life. As a child she travelled with him all over the country while he painted landscapes. She showed an early preference for theatricals, and made her stage bow in Budapest in a musical production.

She has travelled widely, appearing on the stage in Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, Italy, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, India, England and France. She has played in *The Front Page*, *White Horse Inn*, *Special Edition* and numerous other musical comedies and plays.

Between engagements she starred in several films in Budapest. She has sung in New York cafés and played on Broadway in the revival of the *Merry Widow*.

She was in rehearsal, playing the lead in another New York musical, when producer David L. Loew offered her the feminine lead in the Marx Brothers' picture. She went to Hollywood immediately. Now every major studio is bidding for her services.

4 STAR FEATURE

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MILDRED PIERCE

THE TIME, THE PLACE,
AND THE GIRL

THE BIG SLEEP

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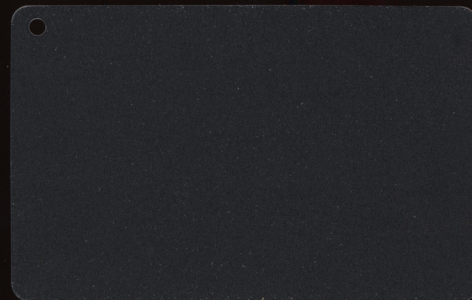
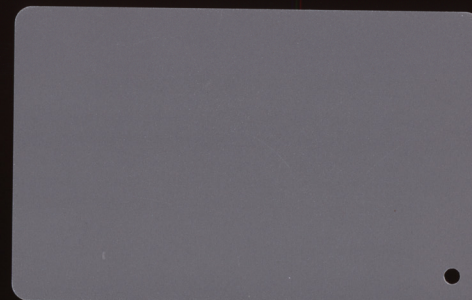
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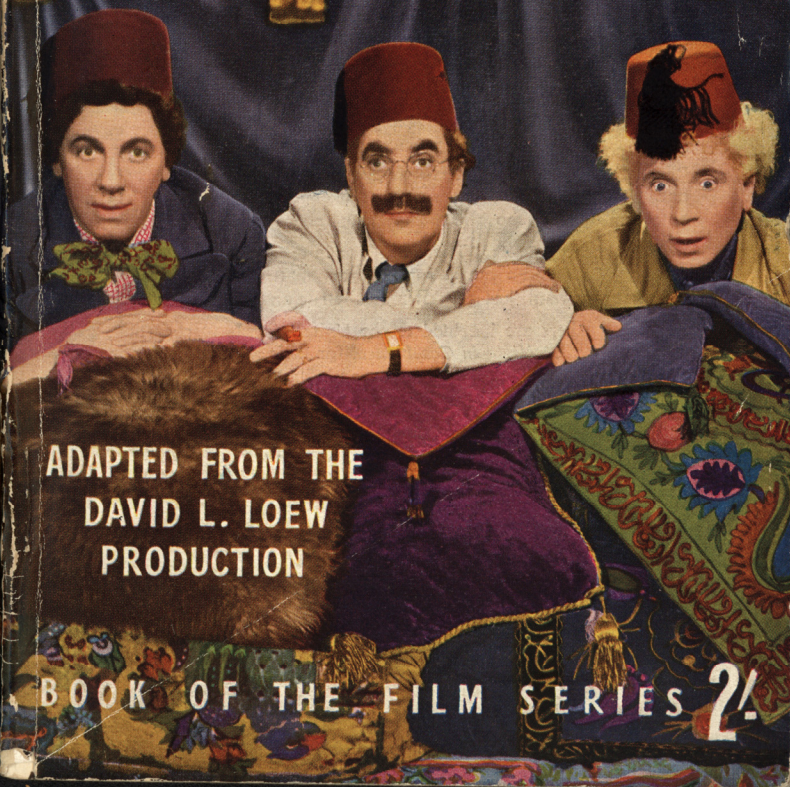
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